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PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

Sidney Herschel Small
John Dorman
Arthur O. Friel
William P. Barron
Arthur D. Howden Smith
Charles Victor Fischer
Royce Brier
David Thibault
F. St. Mars

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2 Complete Novelettes

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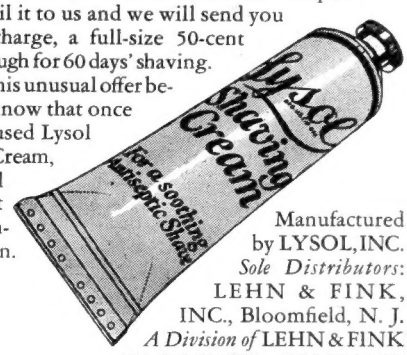

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Herpetology, Railroading and Entomology.

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A New Serial and Three Complete Novelettes

"EITHER I am on the track of the most important discovery of modern times, or else I will explode a fable that has become a tenet of religion for a third of the world." This, in part, was the message that sent two white men through the Valley of the Indus into the forbidden reaches of darkest Tibet. The first instalment of "RAMSDEN," a new serial by Talbot Mundy, will appear in the next issue.

THE stranger bought *Durant* a meal when he was hungry. Then he gave *Durant* a job—and a coat with a bullet-hole in it. "THE AGENT OF THE HAWK," a complete novelette by Leslie McFarlane, will appear in the next issue.

ROUGE went over the seams of his uniform with a white-hot wire. Said he, "I gotta do somethin' or they'll be pickin' my bones." And then his ambulance detachment was ordered out to an unknown dressing station. "THE ROOFS OF VERDILLOT," a novelette by Leonard H. Nason, will appear complete in the next issue.

TALES of life on the ranges drifted into New York's East Side and fired the ambition of *Ikey Katz*, who, being a man of action, forthwith put on his shallow derby, bought from a broken-down actor a cowboy's outfit with orange-colored chaps, and set sail around the Horn on a windjammer with a crew of credulous squareheads and a most unsympathetic mate. "IKEY KATZ, COWBOY," is a complete novelette by Norman Springer in our next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this issue.

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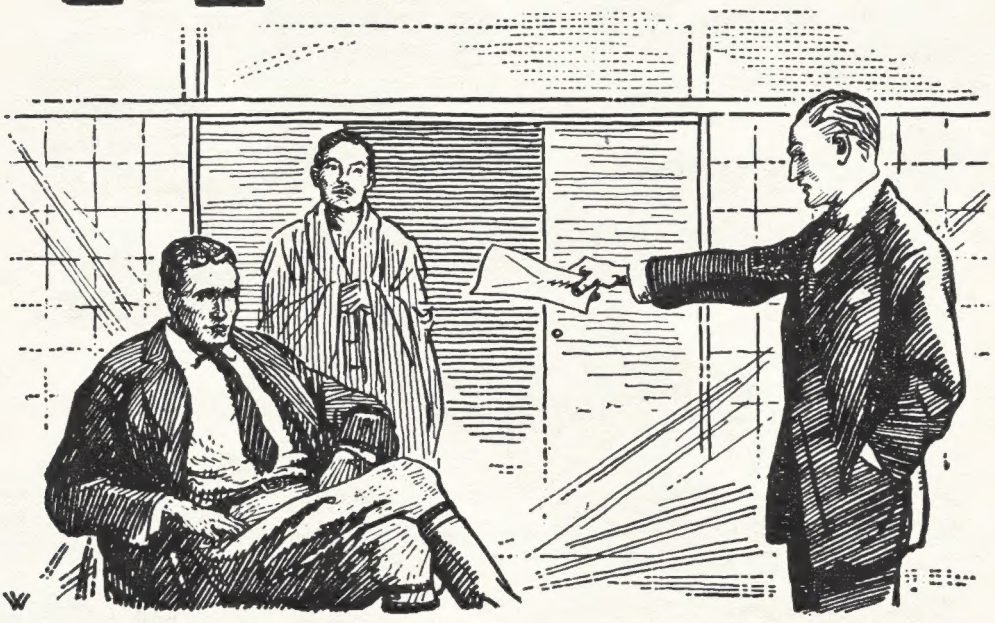

THE SUN CROWS

A Complete Novel

by Sidney Herschel Small

Author of "The Last Laugh," "The Scarecrow," etc.

AS WESTGAARD turned into the twisting, ice-paved street known as the way of the Blind Blacksmith—the most ancient Japanese in Okonai does not remember a smithy, let alone one in which a toiler worked out his sightless days over a forge—his eyes sought the end of the path where, blocking further passage, his house stood. It resembled its fellows in every way save in the light which sprayed from the front panels.

This radiance at once pleased and irritated Westgaard. He was cold; here was promise of warmth, and yet warmth did not depend any at all on the burning of his precious mineral oil, which was what the brightness told him was happening. There was little enough of that oil left, and neither bean-oil nor rapeseed-oil would do more in his States-made lamp than flare and smoke. He had tried that last winter. Or was it the year before?

He stepped over the frozen slush gingerly, deciding what punishment he would give Mumaka, his house-boy; suddenly he grinned and chuckled aloud. Hadn't he, in helping Mumaka with his English, read something last night about setting a beacon in the window to guide the tired homecomer? And hadn't Mumaka spelled out every English word on every object in the house?

While Westgaard had read, Mumaka had stopped him again and again with his "Wha' is?" but the word "beacon" had troubled him none at all—and Westgaard, now, knew why. Wasn't the lamp trademarked Beacon? Westgaard was glad that he read

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clearly. Otherwise, Mumaka might have opened the last tin of bacon, and set that out as a guide. It'd have been a guide, too, but for the white winter-ants.

The mineral oil was low, but what difference? His relief-agent always came in April and brought supplies with him. April —say, wasn't that only a few weeks away? Two—or perhaps three?

Westgaard forgot the biting cold.

He hoped that the club in Yokohama would still have the same chino cook they'd had a year ago. Or wasn't it two? Funny how the feeling of time left a man, up here in the mountains where he didn't even see a missionary; he ought to have remembered instantly that he'd missed last year's vacation, because the relief-agent hadn't known a piece of brocade from jacquard-loom stuff, nor tea unless it was already packaged and marked, nor the look of a camphor-tree unless he cut into it.

But—that Yokohama cook! In the last ten paces to the house Westgaard made a swift decision in favor of consommé, beefsteak and French-fried potatoes—or would a baked one taste better?—and as much pie made out of fresh fruit and as much coffee with real cream as he could hold. As he stamped his feet on the cleared rocks of the house-path he hoped that his own cook hadn't drenched everything in that confounded new sauce he'd made from *daikkon*.

He pushed back the panel, shouting for Mumaka to come with stockings and sandals, and in that instant was aware something was wrong. An overpowering odor greeted him, the smell of onion being fried with bacon—the last tin, the one he'd been saving.

The afternoon had been none too satisfactory. Egg-cards in some of the storehouses had spoiled, and Westgaard knew that this meant there would be a greater amount of the poorer silk made from the *yama-mae*—the mountain cocoon. Worse, the cold had nipped the first tender leaves of mulberry that had put out, and, no better, Westgaard himself was cold of body and wet of feet. Only toward evening had the slush turned to ice.

Mumaka came scurrying toward him, sandals and warmed wool socks in one hand and a wadded kimono over the other arm; Westgaard refused to heed his swift, apologetic "*Danna-san!*" but sent his voice roaring out to the kitchen.

"Come out here, cow-face!" he demanded of the invisible cook. "Is there no sense in your head? It looks like an egg, being hairless, and serves you no better than one when you try to think. Have I not told you that no tin was to be opened unless I told you?"

Mumaka waved the socks wildly, and drew Westgaard's attention to himself.

"And you, do you believe that oil from cans can be picked from the persimmon tree, when we have no more? Is there no intelligence at all in this house?"

As he heard footsteps coming from the kitchen, he added bitterly—

"This is assuredly a place of lunatics—"

"It sounds like that very thing," Westgaard heard, in English.

Westgaard grinned sheepishly at the white man, and was about to greet him warmly, when he saw, with amazement, that the newcomer, who had obviously been in the kitchen, was not smiling at all, and apparently had not been joking, but meant what he said. More, he had applied the words to Westgaard.

To his own desire to see, to talk to, a white man was added Westgaard's acquired Japanese politeness under any circumstance, and yet he strangely was unable to say anything to the man, but stood watching him while Mumaka worked at the frozen knot of his shoe-lace. From the man's pale eyes and thin frame, from his meticulous dress, Westgaard decided that the fellow was a missionary, and of the meddling kind. A thing that had always been spared him. Something must be said, but before Westgaard could get at the right words, the stranger said calmly—

"My name is Heald."

He said it as if that settled everything.

Westgaard said slowly—

"How do you do, Mr. Heald?"

"I take it that you are Westgaard?"

There was another silence, and then Mumaka began to whisper hastily in harsh hill-patois that this new *seiyo-jin* had ordered the cook to open the bacon, and to fry it and the onions, together with a tin of beef which had arrived; that the cook had remonstrated, but that— Mumaka got no further, for the newcomer asked Westgaard what the Japanese was saying.

Westgaard did not know why he lied. He said:

"He was telling me of something I asked about this morning. You—er—you seem

to have—er—made yourself at home, Mr. Heald."

"I was forced to," Heald stated. "These servants nearly refused to do anything toward food until you returned."

"We didn't expect a visitor. It has been months—since last fall, anyhow, since we've had one." He added rapidly, "It's all right—about the bacon, I mean. I'd have opened it anyhow, seeing there's company. But I *did* say that it should be left alone. ——, you don't know how we hang on to a thing like that! And, in winter, it is almost impossible to get across the mountains. Although we get good silk here."

The other did not seem to hear him.

In vile Japanese, he told the cook to hurry to the kitchen and place the pans on the fire again, or the food would get soggy with grease.

Westgaard said softly:

"Don't you think I'd better give the orders, Mr. Heald? It—looks—a little more satisfactory for the boss to do that, doesn't it?"

Heald smiled. To Westgaard it seemed as if he had been planning that smile for some time, and that it gave him great satisfaction. The newcomer reached into his inside coat-pocket, and brought out a letter. On the envelope Westgaard saw the company's imprint.

"This will tell you who I am," Heald said, the smile still stiff on his face.

Westgaard took it, looked at his own name typewritten and underlined, and then stuffed it into his pocket.

"You must be the relief-agent," he said. "I'll read the letter when I warm up. Cigarets, Mumaka. And blow up the fire-pit."

He repeated the last in Japanese, then, reverting to English, said to Heald, as he pulled a flat cushion toward the charcoal fire:

"It would be a good idea if you wait until I'm gone before ordering the servants about. I'll be back in a few months, you know; it's a good thing for them to have only one master."

"Read the letter," Heald said sharply.

Westgaard made no motion toward it. Instead, he lighted the cigaret Mumaka had brought him from a coal in the near-by brazier—*hibachi*—and stuck his chilled feet close to the fire-pit. Then, controling himself, he told the waiting cook to prepare whatever food had been started. He wanted to tell him to take the stuff and pitch it into the snow—but such action would make Heald's stay even more difficult, since it would shear him of any power at all, even in his own household.

Heald said again, still remaining standing—

"Read the letter, Westgaard."

"It'll wait," Westgaard retorted. "I'm darned tired. It was a cold day to chase around in the hill-huts. Things at home, in the home office, seem important, but out here— Lord, Heald, there's always plenty of time."

He forgot, as he warmed, his dislike of the man; *this* time he was going out of the hills, whether Heald knew silk from camphor; he could afford to be civil, or at least as decent as the ass'd let him. Where, he wondered, had the company found him? He thought of questions he wanted to ask about the States, little commonplace things no newspaper ever thought of printing.

Before he could speak of the first of these, the other coughed as preliminary to speech, and then said in his reedy voice:

"Yes, Westgaard, that's the real trouble here. There has been entirely too much idle time."

Westgaard would not allow the other to anger him. He said quietly—

"When you've been in the Orient nine years or so you'll probably talk differently."

"Why didn't you make use of the wasted hours, that are the company's?"

Without heat Westgaard asked—

"And what use should I make of them?"

He understood the fervor each relief-agent had to make a record of some kind, and attributed Heald's ill-timed questions to that.

"If there's another district in Uzen province that ships any more, or any better, crude or finished stuff to the States, I don't know about it. And we're getting the choice of the tea. In the Orient, Heald, you don't hurry—you can't, honestly."

Intent on his friendly desire to placate, he added:

"You can't ring a buzzer here and have a subordinate figure out any details for you. Instead of that, you sit—like I am now—on the matting, and concentrate on that god of the Everlasting Wind over in the corner—I picked that up over Noshambo way in 1919, when I—"

He did not say what he had been doing,

although the company officials knew that his leave of absence had been requested by the Imperial Government, and had something to do with gun-cotton.

Heald said nothing, and Westgaard went on:

"You look at the god's belly, and look and look, and after a while you've made up your mind how each detail ought to be handled, and then—" grimly—"then it freezes, and your plans aren't worth a rin-piece. But Okonai district hasn't done so badly, year in and year out—been lucky, of course."

"Some of the idle time should have been put into shipping us some camphor," Heald said. "That's what I'm going to do."

Westgaard laughed shortly.

"Don't," he said.

"Why not?"

"Make trouble, old man. You can get some. There's some in the province. I've made friends here and there—they'll sell you some of it. Better leave it alone, though. Pretty nearly a government monopoly, camphor is. Not good business to fool with it. I never have. Safer to buy refined stuff on the market, at the set price."

"Why didn't you set that out on the territory-conditions reports?"

Westgaard lighted a second cigaret.

"You mean the long pink ones?" he asked.

"Naturally."

"No time. No time," he said, waving a hand vaguely. "Last time I was in Yokohama I told one of the boys in the office there about it all. No use in repeating."

"Those reports are the essence of the company's being, Westgaard!"

The big man on the matting grunted:

"The —— you say!" Then, soberly, "Pink reports won't export silk, Heald."

"Possibly not. But they would permit the men at the home office—the men with brains—to map out a campaign that—"

"If those men don't know camphor's almost a sacred thing; if they haven't found out that there's only twelve million pounds of the stuff produced yearly—a million in China, two here, and the rest in Formosa, what good'd my reports do 'em? Say," sharply—"you ever been at the home office?"

"I designed those reports you speak so disparagingly of, Westgaard!"

"Sorry I said anything. It'll do you good, out here. You'll find a lot of things out no report'd ever give you, Heald. I have. ——, but I have an appetite! Mumaka! Whisky-peg!"

"The company's orders forbid drinking, Westgaard."

Westgaard stood up, and stretched grandly.

"Sure—I know that. But this is an occasion, man! Me not seeing a white man for months!" He examined the other's sour face, and then said, "*You* needn't—but I'm going to."

"Have it your own way."

"I will, I will," Westgaard assured him, and took the glass and bottle from Mumaka. "Aside from that, it isn't any too hot in here."

"It is extremely uncomfortable. I intend cutting a hole in the roof and placing a stove in."

WESTGAARD poured his drink.

"Hard to get anything but charcoal here," he suggested. "Wood—as wood, is too precious. Better forget the stove. Winter's about over, anyhow."

Westgaard, as he drained his glass, thought what an iron stove would do to the lovely bare room. It might be warmer, yes, but was the sense of sight nothing? Well, let Heald have his stove. When Westgaard came back he'd give it away or something.

"And nail down a good warm carpet, also."

"On my polished floor? Say, Heald, have a heart! Mumaka's pretty nearly broken his back on that floor. I'm no old maid, but I can't see the good of spoiling something as beautiful as this floor. Why, man, the wood dates back into the days of the Shogunate! It's as old as that samurai sword standing against the wall."

Heald looked at the sword, and then said:

"Carpet. And that sword had better be put away. Of course, I carry a gun—"

"What for?"

"I carry a gun, but I would not want so handy a weapon about. In the possession of a disgruntled servant—"

In a lower voice than he had ever used before, Westgaard said:

"If I were you, Heald, I'd lay off the servants. There may be better, but not more faithful. When I had pneumonia, Mumaka and the cook—Hmm! I suppose if I'd written *that* on a pink report and

mailed it I'd been nursed by absent treatment! What I want to say is this—and I've tried pretty hard not to say it—lay off! Go easy! You're relief-man. I've been here many a year. I'll be here a long time yet, and I don't want my household disrupted. If you have trouble with the boys, it will not be their fault. Oh, they're careless, and all that, but—leave 'em alone, Heald. I was going to give you a hand, getting started, so you could make some kind of record while you're here. Now—do as you want, and be —— to you. I'll have to repair the damage you do when I get back, but in the meantime go your own way."

"Really, Westgaard, I'd read that letter if I were you."

The sleek smile had returned to Heald's face.

"You know what is in it, eh, Heald?"

"Naturally."

"Is it customary to tell assistants what should come to the agent himself?"

"Do I look like an assistant, Westgaard?"

Westgaard examined him carefully. Then he said:

"In justice to all of those who have gone before, I can't say you do. Nor would I care to say what you do look like. You know what is in the letter. Good. Tell me."

"Read it and find out."

"You mean 'and weep,' I'd say. No—I don't want to read it. From the size of it—the thickness—there wasn't very much. So you just save me the trouble, please, and tell me. I'm hungry, and I want to eat. Get busy, Heald. What's in it?"

As the other did not reply, Westgaard added:

"I've seen a lot of men come here, to give me my rest, but none of them have ever acted like you. Perhaps that's because they didn't know what you know, nor had the advantage of pink reports. I want to know what is in the letter, Heald, and I want you to tell me."

Heald struck an attitude. It had been, always, an effective attitude. Stenographers and clerks in the home office knew that when Heald "tried to look like a man," some one was in for trouble. They cringed, but Westgaard laughed. Then, dispassionately, he reached out a hand and pulled Heald to him.

"I'm listening," he suggested mildly.

His words did not frighten Heald, but his eyes did. It was, with the newcomer, a matter of principle; Westgaard must do as he was told; now it began to be something else—a matter of his personal safety. The home office often spoke of Westgaard's temper.

"Be careful," Heald shouted shrilly, then, as the other did not release him, said: "I want to warn you that I shall protect myself. I knew you would act beastly when you heard you are to leave Okonai for good! That hard thing you feel against your chest is my gun, Westgaard! I am prepared for anything—"

Westgaard flung him off, so that he rolled almost into the fire-pit, did actually burn a finger and sat sucking it ludicrously.

"You weren't prepared for that, were you?" Westgaard asked.

"If you come near me I'll shoot!"

Westgaard made no motion toward him, but, when he asked as to the contents of the letter, Heald told him.

"Just that I leave Okonai permamently, and report at Yokohama? And leave you in charge of what will be an organized district, as well as Okonai? Lord, Heald, that's nothing to get excited about. Quit sucking your finger! You remind me of my Aunt Hilda's second kid! Come and eat. I'm not fussy who I eat with."

Mumaka served the two men in silence. What had happened he had, of course, seen, through a hole in one of the sliding panels made for that very purpose. The food was quickly eaten, from little lacquered stands; when the meal was over Westgaard said to the boy—

"Is the rice-seller at the inn?"

Mumaka said that he was.

"And he has his horse with him?"

The house-boy nodded.

"If you do not answer with words, I will take off your ears and hang them to dry over the *hibachi!*" Westgaard shouted, trying futilely to cover his real feeling. "Go to the inn. Tell the rice-seller I will give him seven yen, gold, to take his horse over the mountains. Seven—no more. And, thief, tell him *seven*, not six. You get more than you earn."

"It is cold to travel tonight, *danna-san*," Mumaka muttered. "Shall I arrange your travel-clothes now, or when the horse is here?"

"I will see to them. You see, boy—I take them all."

Mumaka blinked at this. He said nothing, but bobbed his head and went toward the kitchen for his *geta* with the four-inch-high clogs. Before Westgaard had settled to his work of gathering his clothes and putting them into his own small flat trunk, the cook was in the room, with no apology; a wizened, saternine old Japanese.

The cook, barefooted, went into his business at once.

"Does *it*—" a finger at Heald—"stay forever?"

"It has been written so, old one."

"It is no longer your house?"

"No longer mine."

The withered cook gathered his spittle in his mouth, and let fly in the middle of the clean matting. Then, smiling broadly, he said:

"I will have food for your trip across the mountain, *danna-san*. That completes my duty to you, who have been good to me. My duty to *him* I just did—and I will go in the night. Will you take a paper of prayers for me, and use it if there is trouble, *danna-san?* And if you encounter none, burn them at Ise, and remember a word for me! The gods have not been too kind lately."

Heald said sharply—

"Cook, get a rag and—"

The old Japanese waved his arms like O-Saru, the monkey-on-the-stick, grimaced horribly, lifted a leg and waggled his big toe at Heald, and with sudden dignity stalked out of the room.

"What's the matter with him?" Heald said querulously.

"He didn't say," Westgaard answered, and began to open the concealed cupboards of the room.

His belongings were few. Between clothes he packed a *hing-yao* bowl, a thing sparkling like mingled silver and snow, and —with misgivings—a *t'o-t'ai-khi* vase fragile as the wings as the silkworm-moth and no heavier than the shell of an egg; he rolled up the kakemono of the Wind and placed it carefully along the side of the trunk.

"Is there an inventory?" Heald asked.

Westgaard did not answer him, although the veins at his temples began to throb.

He wondered that in all these years he had actually accumulated so little; it took no time at all to pack. He told himself that he was glad to get away—for good. For the first time curiosity about the letter assailed him. Was he to be transferred? Where? And why? If Heald had not been watching him furtively Westgaard might have opened the letter. As it was, perversely, he took it from his pocket and laid it on the coals of the fire-pit.

It had been quiet and peaceful, this room of his. For what was he changing it? The soft weathered matting on the floor, the polished wood itself, the red-and-gold stands, the little embroidered cushions—it was home, that was what it was! And the corner of the garden where he'd had Mumaka take out the rocks, and had planted hollyhock and foxglove. to riot with the tree-peonies.

He *was* an old maid, that was what he was! But, just the same, where else was home?

Something seemed to trouble Heald.

He broke the silence at last.

"It was I who pointed out to the home office how inefficient your work was, Westgaard!" Heald snarled. "Remember that, now that you are kicked out!"

"Am I kicked out? Thanks. I wondered."

"Practically kicked out."

WESTGAARD would have liked to ask more, but choked the words back. He heard, soon, Mumaka's shouts and, with them, curses from the rice-seller. He took the padded kimono off very gently, and laid it in one of the emptied cupboards; picked up his trunk easily, smiled at Heald's back, and, looking neither to right nor left, walked to the outer panels. With one hand, balancing the trunk on the other shoulder, he pushed the panel back, turned and said softly:

"See you again some day, Heald. If you run short of charcoal, as you will if the cold holds, don't buy more from the shop next to the broom-seller's. It's poor grade, and he's a robber. And—good-by."

Heald's back did not move, nor did he give any answer. Westgaard laughed as noiselessly as he had earlier smiled.

The rice-seller's pony was no taller than a burro, and little fatter; on his back was already a small, corded wooden box. Westgaard gave this last a casual glance, and then told the rice-seller to take it off; that the man would be free to return to Okonai in the morning and need therefore take nothing with him. The rice-seller scratched his

head at this, and finally admitted that the box was not his own.

"Then, since I have hired your horse, take it off. I wish to go as quickly as possible, and my trunk will be weight enough. For this journey you are already being well paid. Take it off."

"Take it off," Mumaka echoed. "It is not heavy—that is, not very heavy. Take it off. I will carry it."

"You?" Westgaard asked. "Are you coming with me to the railroad?"

"I had thought of it, *danna-san*."

"Think better, then. It will be cold, and the way may be blocked with snow. It is not worth whatever you have been paid to take the box out." Seeing Mumaka's crestfallen countenance, Westgaard added swiftly:

"There; if you already have been paid, I'll take the box with me. You've been a good boy, Mumaka."

"I—I must go with the box," Mumaka wailed. "It—is my own box!"

"If you want to leave Okonai, why not wait until the cold is over? Stay with the new *danna-san*, take his money for it and then—"

"I will not stay!" Mumaka snarled. "He is not my master. You are! Who will be there to see that you have warmed clothes? Who will keep the rats from eating the paste that makes your foreign shoes shine like red lacquer? *Mah!* It is plain— I must go with you."

"But I don't know what I'm going to do until I report to Yokohama," Westgaard muttered.

"There, of course, the gods enter into the matter," Mumaka said cheerfully. He looked shrewdly at the white man, saw no acquiescence in his face, and so broke at once into a rash of words:

"When I was sick, you took me from the temple to be your own servant, *danna-san*. What was I before? A sweeper. A cleaner. Some day I would be a ninth-class priest! I was no bigger than the stunted tree in the big pot. *Ha!* but do you remember how I looked? My head was addled with knowledge, with stories of gods and devils, with languages and talk not of Japan, but of China and that strange country half Chinese and half our own to the south—the land our head-priest's drunken brother taught me of, for none else would listen to him! My head, I say, was filled to overflowing, but my belly was very empty. I will do whatever you say, Westgaard-*san*. I—I have even—made you my ancestor, since I know no other, and burn sticks before a tablet I had made—for you. Take me with you, *danna-san!*"

Westgaard whirled on the gaping rice-seller.

"Why do you wait?" he snapped. "Prod up that horse of yours. My man and I are ready to go!"

II

MUMAKA squatted grandly on one of the padded benches which ran the length of either side of the car; squatted at Westgaard's feet. The white man was stretched at full length, his hands pillowing his head, his body only moving when the train swerved on its down-hill course, yet he was not asleep. Mumaka thought he was, or the little Japanese would never have gone through such by-play as showing the two tickets he carried, nor a bit of sleight-of-hand he had learned in the temple with an orange he had bought at the mountain town where the two had taken the train.

The side-seats were nearly empty. On a blanket spread on the bare boards of the car's floor a family made their morning meal, the wife nursing her youngster every other minute, serving the others, between courses, whole bananas and Japanese tea. Two Japanese men, well fortified with whisky, snored gloriously in a corner, while their wives sat stolidly beside them, alert to wave away persistent mountain-gnats from the sleepers' open mouths. Oblivious, uncaring, a third man stripped off kimono and underkimono and made a change in costume to trousers and short wadded jacket; that there were women in the car meant nothing—in fact, they would have performed a similar toilette in a similar manner, had any felt the desire.

Mumaka was very full; he had eaten heartily of *oden*, of soaked dry fish, of sweet potato, and watered every remaining crevice with tea. His good-humor was unabating, but despite himself and the wonders to be seen through the car windows he began to bob his head incongruously; his eyes began to bat. Finally he could stand it no longer, but slumped, all at once, into a heap and, knees still tucked under him, slept. Westgaard remained motionless a moment, then

quietly sat up and stretched the boy along the bench more comfortably.

He was very tired; tired, and at once restless and uneasy. On the tramp across the mountain, in the biting cold, exposed at the summit and along its hog-back to sweeping wind and driving sleet, he had had no time to think, nor had he desired to. Now he knew that he must. Okonai, with his peaceful, well ordered house, was behind him. His last glance at the village, from the twist in the mountain-path, had shown him a place filled with sleep, with only the prayer-chamber of the temple showing light; no sound followed him until he was a half mile distant and completely out of sight, and then the temple-bell announced the last hour for prayer.

No other bell took up the iambic rhythm; Okonai was a village far from any other, and only scattered huts and empty Shinto shrines were nearer than ten miles.

Well, that was past; he must not think of it. He had often thought of leaving Okonai. Even of leaving it for good. But not as he was going now. He had thought of being given a half dozen districts like Okonai to oversee—as this swine Heald had achieved. He had thought, some day, of a big chair at the home office, and a comfortable club where more of the Orient gang would hang out—and he had this!

Why? He had tried to avert trouble with Heald. But that had made no difference. It was already in the cards what was to happen. Why? Okonai had always shipped mighty near everything exportable, and at a fair price to every one. The report business: what did the Old Man care about reports? The Old Man knew what the Orient was. Getting the stuff, that was the main thing! And yet Heald had been in some one's confidence, or he wouldn't have known what was what. And who would take a fellow like Heald into his confidence?

Westgaard was undecided. Should he, when he got to Yokohama, tell the company to jump into the Japan Sea? That he would have then wasted nine years meant nothing to him. He did not think of that. There were plenty of outfits who would be very satisfied to have him with them; he did not think of that, either. He knew very positively what he wanted. To discover the why of this fellow Heald, the why of the whole confounded business.

There came to him the notion that he'd been getting kind of fat, kind of easy-going and satisfied at Okonai; well, that might all be changed. Heald had said that Westgaard was "practically" discharged. What did that mean? That he'd be prodded into resigning? That he'd be given some impossible task? That he'd be offered a clerkship they knew he would never accept?

He mulled these over in his mind carefully trying to pick the correct conjecture.

The rails of the train began to find smoother, more level ground, and the wind-blown pines and cedars gave way to patches of rice and millet, covered with water here and there frozen across in squares. The click of the wheels became more and more monotonous and even—*click-click, click-click*—and Westgaard found his eyes growing heavier. Even the excitement and shouting as a half dozen conscripts got into the car at a station did not do more than make him half alert, although the banner-waving party who saw the youths away for service stamped noisily through the car behind the Shinto priest of the village.

He did not waken until the train pulled into Oyama, where the change for Tokyo was made, and, with Mumaka at his heels, was the last out of the car. Stiff, cold, he insisted upon taking the first train out; Mumaka, who had visions of a warm eating-shop, did the best he could about the station, and brought into the Tokyo-Yokohama train two bowls of hot boiled macaroni, tea and boiling water, dried and sugared persimmons, which, in the crowded car, he insisted that Westgaard eat before he would eat his own.

It was dark again before the train snorted into Yokohama; here, despite the continued cold, it was raining, and the streets took the downpour and made rivers of it. Westgaard told Mumaka to find the trunk, to have it sent to the club and to come with it; he himself could not wait even the fifteen minutes this would require, but beckoned to a waiting Ford, and it hurried away with him to the same destination.

The streets and gutters ran free and the machine swerved, lunged, skidded, but Westgaard said no cautioning word to the Japanese driver. He had told the fellow that an extra yen would result for speed, and, even in low gear, when the thumping machine began to climb the Hill, the driver kept the gas throttle three-quarters open.

DINNER was over; the club members were around the fireplace. The room was delicious, to Westgaard's starved senses, with light, with aromatic Turkish cigaret smoke, while over it stole the delectable distant scent of white-man cooking. At the outer door a boy had taken his coat and hat, and now, about to enter the room, Westgaard blinked at the brightness; he paused a moment, and before he came across the threshold a voice shouted—

"Hey, Westgaard!"

Chairs scraped, twisting the heavy rugs about; men heaved themselves out of lazy postures and jumped up and toward him. He found his hand shaken violently by man after man, while they laughed and yelled at him all together.

He sputtered:

"Give me a Melachrino, somebody. Mine ran out almost a month ago— What's the matter with you? I know —— well it can't be Christmas, or you'd be glum as posts."

A hand clapped him on the shoulder, and he turned.

"Well, well, Mac," he said. Then, "What you doing here? Anything wrong up Shinoto way?"

A great roar of laughter greeted that.

Westgaard lighted his cigaret, and said:

"I think you're all crazy! What did I say that was funny? Or have you fellows been drinking King William since chow-time? Or—" a sudden notion striking him—"I'll bet old Mac has gone and got himself married!"

McCall winked.

"Nope. I'm goin' to get m'self divorced, George."

Westgaard did not know what to take from that. He said, slowly:

"It sounds good to be called by my name, instead of *danna-san*. Divorced? I—I didn't know you'd ever been married, Mac."

"I'm gettin' a divorce in a manner of speakin'. You see—"

"It's about time I saw something," Westgaard rumbled. "If you weren't teetotal, Mac, I'd say you were half-seas over. Come clean. I've been away a long time. What's the joke? Is it on me?"

"It's on us all, George," McCall answered. "Cast your eyes around. You know all of us—that is, all except that young Whitney here—this is Westgaard, Whitney, as I suppose you guessed!—and it looks like a reg'lar meetin', doesn't it? Here's me, from Shinoto district. Here's you, from Okonai. Harry Wilson's just behind you. Do you think Harry'd leave Nagasaki to come up to Tokyo Street with six sailin's this week? Bid Hayes is upstairs in Carstairs' room; old Bid doesn't come to Yokohama once in five years, but sails straight for the States from the north. What you make of that, George?"

"The clan seems to have gathered," Westgaard admitted. "Are—all of you—fired?"

"You bet!" Wilson said. "And half the office with us. You see before you the start of a new company. We'd been betting that you'd be in today or tomorrow, or a day or so after that insect Heald came to Okonai. Tell us, George, did you hit him?"

"No. I didn't hit him. The best I can tell you is that my cook spit at him."

"And missed?"

Groans greeted Westgaard's nod.

"Fellow ought to keep his cook in practise," McCall shouted, and clapped his hands for a boy.

The men all found seats, with Westgaard in the middle; drinks were brought, but before Heald's ill-health could be drunk there was a commotion at the door.

"Crazy-man is!" the door-boy howled, and, on the echo of the words, Mumaka burst into the room.

"He told me to wait for you outside," Mumaka said. "I told him that his father was a toad, and he himself nothing but a wart, that you want me *here*—and here I am!"

McCall grinned broadly.

"That's the kind of boy to have," he announced. "Boy—" to Mumaka—"you seem to be a man of sense. Did you like the new *danna-san* who came in Westgaard-san's place?"

Mumaka shook his head.

"And you knew the stranger had taken Westgaard-san's house from him?"

The boy nodded.

"And you let him do all this, and said nothing, and did nothing? *Hai!* What kind of servant are you?"

Mumaka showed every tooth in his head, and, glancing apologetically at Westgaard, said:

"There was little time. I only was able to tell the inn-keeper that my *danna-san* left because the Company had no more money,

and not to sell anything save for gold, and to take no promises. I said it would be better to sell to the English people over the mountains; to wait until spring. You see," he added, "I had little time to plan. Otherwise—" showing his teeth again— "I might have added a dead cat to the box of stinging ants I put in the sleeping-quilts before I left."

There was a gale of laughter. All knew, unpleasantly, the bite of the little red ant, knew also how impossible it was to rid crevices of a dozen of them—and Mumaka had not stopped in buying a dozen. There in Okonai, all realized, Heald would have no simple task in overriding Mumaka's warning to the inn-keeper. It might take a year to do it—and in the intervening time Heald would find little to be bought, and that at an exorbitant price.

Westgaard was about to censure Mumaka mildly, when a new thought came to him.

"Where's Bob Jones?" he asked. "Bob's the nearest to Yokohama. Is he still on the job? I'd hate to see old Bob—"

"Bob went home," McCall said shortly.

"Fired?"

"He fired himself."

Westgaard, seeing McCall's reticence, ordered the bar-boy to show Mumaka where the trunk was to be put, and told Mumaka to open it.

That Jones, sober, placid, easy-going, working for the wife at home, should resign seemed impossible. It was impossible, and not to be seriously considered.

"Let's hear it," Westgaard asked.

"Bob's wife—a month ago, about—was sick. No, it's just five weeks: remember, boys, we figured it out? And—"

There was a pause; McCall seemed loath to continue. Westgaard sensed the unpleasant, and stirred in his chair. He and Jones had come to the Orient together; he liked Jones, and the men knew it.

"Spit it," Westgaard said. "I don't like mystery."

"Five weeks ago, about three days after Heald and his batch of orders arrived from Frisco, Jones got a cable to come home. That Mrs. Jones was seriously sick. Jones wired in, of course, asking permission to get out on the *Tenyo*. The Old Man—Carstairs, that is—was out in the city somewhere, or maybe on the Bund, and so our Mr. Heald took it upon himself to wire Jones that he couldn't leave until a man was there to take his place. Carstairs got back an hour or so later, and went more or less crazy. He wired Jones to come on. Jones did. But he missed the *Tenyo* and had to wait four days and take a slower boat. Couple of days before Bob got to Frisco Carstairs got a cable Mrs. Jones was dead. Bob still on the sea. Prob'ly got a wireless of it. If he'd taken the *Tenyo* he'd got home in time. Carstairs and Heald had it out, but neither one could fire the other. I expect the boss himself'll come out some day. Did you know that he'd—"

Westgaard stood up.

"I believe I'll go upstairs and see Carstairs," he said thoughtfully. "Missed supper, but I'm not hungry—now. See you boys later, maybe."

He walked very slowly from the room. As his big back went through the door, McCall said quietly:

"George's pretty mad. Notice how he picked his words carefully, like they came hard? That's the way he did the time we were up in the north provinces, and a hillman tried to knife the pair of us. Did I ever tell you the story?"

Westgaard mounted the steps slowly. The full import of McCall's tale was beating on him, and the blood beat about his temples. No sign of his anger was visible, save this, when he knocked on Carstairs' door, and, on the summons, entered.

The greeting between the two men was casual.

"Hello, George. Sit down. Smoke?"

Westgaard sat.

They smoked in silence, and finally Carstairs said—

"Got your resignation handy, George?"

"Your room's always a mess, Will," Westgaard grunted. "You ought to get a good boy." Slowly, "No. Not very handy. Should I?"

Carstairs exploded:

"No! But, —— me, George, you might as well."

Westgaard pulled a great draught of cigaret smoke into his lungs.

"That's what I thought," he said. "How 'bout you?"

"I'm going to hang on. You know what happened?"

"Some. Enough. Too much, I expect."

"At home?"

Westgaard put his feet on a chair.

"Not yet," he admitted.

"The Old Man put his kids on the throne. Abdicated, as it were. This baby Heald married one of the Old Man's girls. That enough?"

"Plenty."

"Every time I kick by cable to the Old Man his kids say I'm an old fogy, and he is one too. They say they want a chance. Chance, ——! Before the Old Man makes up his mind—he *is* getting old, George, or we'd not be in this mess!—we won't have ten yen's worth of trade in the Islands! He's taking a pleasure trip out here, though, and has promised his family to do no business at all. That's the only chance I've got, and it is a slim one. Heald —— near had enough authority to fire me. He tried it, but for once the Old Man stuck to his guns. All his kids know about the Orient they learned in Hah-vahd! And this Heald had the guts to tell me—"

"He told me that I was fired. Practically. What'd he mean by that?"

Carstairs did not answer directly. He said—

"Think a lot of your job, George?"

"Not now. I used to."

"You haven't got a Chinaman's chance of keeping it, George."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see—"

As the manager lighted another cigaret, Westgaard said—

"It all comes back to that 'practically', eh, Will?"

"Heald isn't as big a fool as he looks and acts," Carstairs said, grimacing. "I told him— Well, I said you were a pretty good man, George, when he wanted to do what he called 'supplant ancient methods with modern efficiency' and the little squirt said, 'If he's as good as you say he is, we'll give him a chance. Send him into Formosa after camphor'. He knew darn well that it can't be done. Government monopoly. I asked him why he didn't go there, and he said he would, *after* he'd cleaned up the mess here! That day'll never come, George! He's got too much sense to tackle the impossible. And he knows you've got Okonai running like a clock, and he c'n report that he's done as well as you, who've been there for years."

"Clock's run down," Westgaard suggested.

"Yes. And by that time, or even after he gets in your spring business, he'll shoot another man there, and the failure'll be some one else's fault. I know his breed."

"Sometimes," Westgard said calmly, "sometimes the main-spring goes and gets itself broke."

Carstairs's face lighted.

"George! You didn't—"

"I didn't do anything. But—er—my boy did, I expect."

He dropped his feet noisily to the floor, stood erect, and said:

"I didn't do much eating today, Will. And as I remember the chow on the coast boats is rotten. Have the office see about my ticket, Will."

"You can't do it, George," Carstairs said. "It can't be done."

"I know," Westgaard said impatiently. "You are a rotten manager, Will. A real up-to-date man'd quote that little piece about tackling the thing that couldn't be done, and he did it. I can't buy any camphor. No foreigner can. No private Japanese concern can, either, for that matter. Formosa's tighter than a drum. Even if I did steal some of the stuff by offering a fool price, I couldn't ship. There aren't any but Japanese bottoms, and they wouldn't load the cargo."

"Why go, George? What's the use?"

"I kind of want to be on the job when the Old Man gets here. What chance'd I have if I lay down on the job, when I want to remind him of a few things he's forgotten? Bob Jones, for one. Me, for another. Bob darn near made the company." He left his own activities out, but Carstairs knew how large they had been. "Now I'll scout me around a little, if it isn't too late, and after I've eaten, and see—a few people who know something about this Formosa business. Seems like I remember something in the paper about bandit troubles in the hills."

"They always have that."

WESTGAARD blinked, and then said suddenly:

"When's a boat go? Or do I get one at Nagasaki?"

"You can get one here. Noon. A coast tub, all one class, and the Lord have mercy on your digestion."

"I'll be on it," Westgaard said soberly. "Say, Will, has Heald a friend in the office here?"

"One. He brought it with him."

"Suppose you let Mr. Friend hear you say that I'm getting away with a good one on the company and on Heald; that I went to Formosa knowing the job was impossible, but saw a good chance to loaf and still draw my pay for doing nothing except getting fat. Mind doing that?"

"I'll do it, George. But I don't see where it is going to help you any, and it certainly can't do me any good, can it?"

Westgaard looked quizzically about the room before replying. He said slowly:

"May make him cocky and overconfident. Trip him up easier, maybe."

"That the only reason, George?"

Westgaard smashed out his cigaret-end between his fingertips. In a curious mild tone he offered—

"Well, partially the reason."

He stood uneasily from one foot to the other.

"You and me, Will, we've got nothing but our pride mixed up in this thing, but Bob Jones—Bob loved that wife of his—

His voice hoarsened and trailed into silence.

The other man leaned back in his chair. Westgaard's very diffidence was alarming, to those who knew him well.

"Don't tell me, if you don't want to," Carstairs said. "But you're up to something."

"Something, yes. But what that is I don't know—yet. It may not be anything. It all depends. I've got to do some talking around, first. Maybe it's better the company doesn't know anything—officially. I'm just sent to Formosa for camphor. I'll tell you when I know anything for sure. I'll—" gulping—"darn it, Will, I'll even *write* to you on the pink sheets!"

Carstairs began to laugh at the notion of Westgaard's writing any one, Westgaard who might be in the hills for months and never think of saying where he'd gone, nor where he'd gone, nor writing when he returned. As Westgaard closed the door behind him this laughter heartened him, for in it was a new hopeful tone, that had been absent from Carstairs's every word. He strode down the upper hall in better humor, even whistling noiselessly, and began to think gratefully of the food he might consume, and of the fellowship that would be waiting for him, after, among the men about the driftwood fire.

III

AS HER name indicated, the *Hatsu* Maru* was the oldest of her line, and by no means the finest; she was registered at six hundred tons, but Westgaard believed this was gross exaggeration. Instead of the usual course through the Inland Sea, after Oshima had been sighted, she made no swerve but continued southeast by south, her old engines clanking mournfully, muttering at every plate even under the smooth, rusty-green seas. She carried, besides Westgaard and Mumaka, seven other passengers, all Japanese, none of whom was communicative beyond the good-morning stage.

She carried no cargo, and little ballast. Every long swell rolled her from side to side. For the first time in his life Mumaka had no desire to eat; he was as ill from this—after hearing that the food had already been included in the price of the passage, and that one might eat his fill—as from the tossing of the boat. He wailed to Westgaard that only one good thing was coming out of this misery; he was remembering gods to pray to that he had thought forgotten.

The Japanese habit of nibbling food at all hours, and in all places, had made Westgaard's cabin a place for cockroaches; at night tawny rats left the rice-sacks below and did a promenade through every companionway. The white man took this calmly enough; not, the Japanese captain remarked, like the missionaries, who paid little and complained much. Since, in addition to this, the captain's owner had decreed—for some reason which the captain did not know—that the *seiyo-jin* Westgaard was to be treated as well as possible, the white man was allowed on the narrow bridge, and here spent most of the days neither reading nor talking, but staring at nothing at all.

Westgaard was planning what little he could; that, he admitted to himself, was so small that it did not deserve the name of plan. How could he figure out what he did not know?

His mind revolved over and over about the one actual fact in his possession: he had been told, in Yokohama, by telephonic connection with Tokyo, that he could have camphor, in a stated locality—if he could get it. It was made clear to him that even

*First-born.

this was an extreme concession, and made to him only because of the services he had given Japan in 1919; it was made doubly clear that his chances of getting any camphor might be considered as less than an opportunity to put a thunderbolt in a glass jar.

That it had been incumbent on him to sign a statement that the Imperial Government waived all responsibility over his life or his effects, once he left a city in Taiwan*, worried him none. He was grateful for what had been given him, although he saw no way to make it useful.

If the Japanese monopoly could not get the stuff, how could he?

Why they could not get it he was certain. The district must be somewhere far from the *aiyu-sen*—the guard line—of which he had been vaguely told; it must be in the mountains, of course, and—on which fact he had based his original hopes—in a bandit section.

He knew himself now for a fool. If armed men, backed additionally by soldiery, could hope for no immediate success, how could he? What resources had he that they lacked? He felt that he had none. And yet they had everything he would have desired in such a place. Arms, men, knowledge of the territory and conditions. On his part, he had Mumaka, and no information save that of the vaguest kind. In Yokohama Carstairs had told him, as he left the steamer, that there were still plenty of head-hunters in the Taiwan hills; Westgaard was glad, hearing it, that he had said nothing to Carstairs of the note of absolution he had signed.

He asked no questions of the captain. Despite the fact that this officer was friendly, Westgaard realized that any direct query would be met with deliberate evasion and would take him at once beyond the pale of such continued favors as even weak coffee at breakfast.

Each succeeding day greater doubt assailed him. He had, he believed, played squarely into Heald's hands. But what else was there to do? Either he took a whack at the job, or he quit; he had no other alternative. He was not so foolish as to think that the greatest effort in the world would bring about an impossible result, nor could he see any possible benefit from doing his best and failing. And yet, there was always a chance. The government men at Tokyo thought well of him. If there had been *no* chance, permission would not have been granted him.

Theoretically, the thing had to be done, but none knew better than he what the odds were. More than sufficient to make him half wonder if the wise thing wouldn't be to simply take it easy and pile up an expense account. It came to him that even if he accomplished it, would he—and Carstairs and poor Bob Jones—be any better off? Couldn't Heald hog the result, by saying that he had planned the whole affair? At this notion, Westgaard's feet came off the lower rail with a thud and the captain looked at him questioningly.

"*Shikkei nagara.* It is very rude of me," Westgaard said politely. "I was thinking of—distant things."

"Of Taiwan?" the captain asked suavely. "A dangerous place. *Abunai yo!* Very dangerous."

Westgaard lied immediately:

"Yes. Taiwan. I am a little—a very little—frightened."

"*Hai!* In the cities there is nothing to be afraid of. Nor on the railways. As to the rest—*I* think it is the tale of old women!"

Westgaard smoked, and wisely said nothing.

"It is to keep—visitors—away, all those stories," the captain went on cheerfully. "*Mah!* but it is a strange taste, to collect heads! A yellow-haired one like yours, Westgaard-san, would bring a high price."

As the white man grinned back, the captain stated:

"I do not think your gesture was one of a man who is afraid. It is probably all a story, like the tales of demons and devils my honorable father told me when I was still in the rice age." He became confidential. "You are a man—I can see that, even if I had not been told. Do you, then, believe such nonsense that there exist mountain-birds so fierce and large that to them a man is like a worm to a sparrow?"

"No," Westgaard admitted. "I don't believe it." He said nothing of the fact that even as a fable it was new to him. "That is, I would have to see one first."

"That is what *I* say," the little officer

*Taiwan-Formosa. All geographical names are given as used by Japan; if a Chinese name has been retained, it is used, otherwise the new form is given. In some cases the change is no more than phonetic.

ejaculated. "A story for rice-pickers' wives! You and I want to *see* a thing before we accept it as truth. We know that all this foolishness about Sun Crows—"

The final sound of that last word, *karasu*—crow—hung in the air until all of the breath had hissed out of the captain's lungs.

There was a short silence.

Westgaard said—

"Well?"

The captain looked at him frankly.

"I talk too much," he said, and Westgaard had to be content with that.

Westgaard remained on the bridge until fog came creeping out from Okinawa Island; then, with a word of seeing the captain at dinner, he went down to his cabin. Mumaka, who occupied one of the two short berths, had his face against the wall in misery. The white man rolled him over, and, with one of Mumaka's distressed eyes on him, asked quietly—

"When that head-priest's brother told you of Taiwan, Mumaka, did he ever say anything about crows?"

Mumaka shook his aching head.

"Do you know *anything* about crows?"

"They—eat chickens," Mumaka groaned. "Please do not ask me to discuss—eating, *danna-san!*"

"I'm not. But do you know any old tale about a sacred crow? Of course there is the *yatagarasu*, the eight-handed fellow, but he isn't the bird."

"A great many years ago the *yatagarasu* had only three claws."

"Three or eight or eighty makes no difference. Just what did this old-timer look like, Mumaka?"

"I saw a picture of one in a painting at the temple at Okonai. He was just the size of—of a crow. The usual crow. But he had a golden head, and was as red as cow's blood all over, and it is said he roosted—"

Westgaard laughed.

"Are you sure he wasn't blue, Mumaka? Didn't he have pink eyes, and an extra head and sharp teeth? Come out of your bunk, boy, and walk about the deck with me! You've been sick long enough. We'll be ashore late tomorrow, or the next morning. Come! Out of bed."

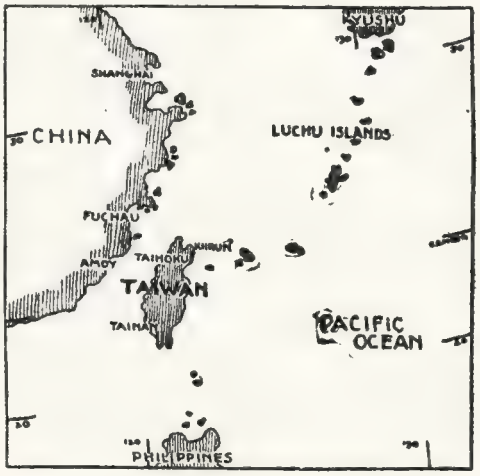
"I will walk when I have something under me that does not jump like a fighting cock, *danna-san*. I know myself for a dying man, and those who die need no exercise—at least in this world."

Westgaard started to leave the cabin. Before he left he asked again:

"You are sure you don't know of a gigantic crow? One as big as a man, and very strong and fierce and wild?"

Mumaka cocked a vindictive eye at his master.

"I know of one," he admitted calmly. "He was twice as large as the temple gate, drank two rivers when he thirsted and when he waved his wings trees blew over.



The same one you spoke of—the pink-eyed blue one." With that he rolled to the wall, well pleased with himself for the first time since on the steamer, and Westgaard left the cabin chuckling also.

He heard no other mention of fabulous birds. On the second following morning, along with a deluge of rain, the *Hatsu Maru*, moving now at less than five knots, was met by a squat black tug, a little craft invisible until within a hundred yards.

The green, lightly-jungled hills about Kiirun* were completely hidden by fog, mist and downpour; despite this, a police official who had come in the pilot-boat stayed close to Westgaard, making certain that he had no camera, although the forts of the bay were indistinguishable from hills and shore. Even the breakwater appeared as a dim, nebulous snake or sea-serpent.

It was two hours before Westgaard was off the boat and in Kiirun, three more before the narrow-gage train jerked its way into

*Keelun

Taihoku, the Japanese capital of Taiwan; what little Westgaard saw of the seaport showed him hybrid Japanese-Western buildings of brick along modern streets. He knew that Taihoku was the camphor-refining city. This, then, was the place for him to go.

Taihoku, he found, was even more modern than Kiirun, except in the Chinese quarter, wide macadam streets, brick buildings, arcades with shops. It seemed impossible to imagine that head-hunting natives, the Taiyals, were within a dozen miles of such a city. With Mumaka at his heels, Westgaard went to deliver the letters he had to the foreign office; he was struck with the military precision with which the city ran.

There were no trams—bicycles rolled silently and as if steered by the compass, big foreign horses on which tiny Japanese bobbed like puppets jogged with formal punctiliousness, the geta-ed school-girls walked like trained soldiers, intermixed were Formosan women in Chinese jackets and pantalettes, in white or black, all carrying umbrellas, although the rain had ceased.

Before Westgaard could see the official-in-chief to whom he bore a letter, he was forced to telephone the Presence, and was told, over and over, "*moshi-moshi*," until even his stalwart patience began to dwindle.

He saw the official at last, in an occidental office; the official, Kagowo-san, wore Western clothes and smoked a Manila cigar. The Japanese looked at Westgaard suspiciously, bobbed his head, offered no word of greeting but reached for the letter—the letter which Westgaard had been begging to present.

It was read through, that letter, every word. It was reread—twice. Then Kagowo stood up and clicked his heels together.

"Well," he said, "what do you want?"

"That is all in the letter," Westgaard suggested.

"You know what is in the letter?"

Westgaard nodded.

"I do. I saw it written."

Kagowo carefully placed his cigar in an ash-tray and indulged in a head-scratch.

"You—were actually in the presence of—"

"And found him quite well," Westgaard smiled.

The official repeated this to himself. Suddenly he reached into a drawer of his desk, pulled out a box of cigars, and said to Westgaard:

"You will smoke, yes? And sit? *Mah!* But this is surprizing! What we have tried to—keep concealed, you are permitted to discover. It is very strange." He picked up his cigar again, puffed it rapidly, and then said, half to himself, "I wonder if you will be able to tell us what is actually the case."

Westgaard did not like mystery.

"What is the case?" he asked.

Kagowo did not answer.

"I can tell you, then," the white man announced. "The district I'm going in to has plenty of camphor-trees. But it is a bandit-infested district. If I can get away with any camphor, it's mine. I need expect no help. Whatever I do I've got to do myself. And the monopoly is not to be effective over any camphor I get out; it's mine, at whatever it costs me. A man of sense, Kagowo-san, realizes that Japan has the bandits to contend with. And that they're head-hunting savages. And also that I've a very small chance of being successful."

"Very small," Kagowo agreed. "Very small indeed. It will be a pity to have the birds eat you."

He said that last with meaning.

Westgaard faced him squarely.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Nothing—nothing. If—you are lost—is it not possible that you might become—food for birds?"

"Lost? Captured, you mean?"

"Well—captured, then. After your head is—removed."

Westgaard looked casually at his cigar-tip.

"I thought that the Taiyals were cannibals," he remarked.

"They have a horrible taste in food," Tagowo admitted.

"How, then, would I be left to the birds?"

Kagowo shrugged a shoulder.

"Who knows?" he said shortly.

Westgaard saw that he was up against the same wall that he had been with the *Hatsu's* captain. And then, blindingly in its hidden import, he saw a connection. He laid a great fist on the desk, smiled disarmingly and said smoothly—

"The Sun Crows?"

Kagowo sputtered, blinked twice and then licked his lips.

"Is there anything you do not know?" he whispered.

Westgaard smiled, as if admitting supernatural knowledge. He repeated—

"The Sun Crows?"

The Japanese nodded feebly.

And Westgaard, feeling that the ground was won, made an error which his years in the Orient should have prevented. He said—

"What of them?"

Kagowo countered immediately with—

"How much do you know?"

The white man, who knew nothing, could only continue to smile wisely, and so try to cover his mistake, but Kagowo would say nothing more. Westgaard said at last:

"The letter said to help me, Kagowo-san. Is this help, this concealing?"

"The letter said to send you where you wish to go," the other corrected. "I will do that. Of explanation, save such as will tell you of camphor-buying, there is no word. On the other hand—I will say this much to you—about—birds: I am forbidden to speak. If—if I told you," he added, "you would not desire to buy any camphor!"

"Try that and see," Westgaard asked, but the official would do no more than shrug his shoulders again.

The two men sat for minutes, neither speaking, while Westgaard cursed his earlier question. Finally Kagowo began an involved explanation of camphor, from the tree to refining, and even to the by-products —celluloid, drugs, perfumes, religious uses, and from that veered into an account of the way Westgaard would get into the camphor-country. He promised to have a man go with Westgaard clear to the *aiyu-sen*—the guard line—to furnish him with what supplies he needed—and stopped.

"Will I need coolies?" Westgaard asked. "Or, since I know I will, where will I get them."

Kagowo waved a hand.

"Anywhere. Only you will please not employ any Japanese. Formosans, yes. *Shina-san*, yes. If I were you, Westgaard-san, I would not say exactly where I intended going."

"Why not? Does every one know—" mercilessly, for the other was floundering badly—"about these Sun Crows?"

"No—no. But there has been some guessing done!"

"Good! Then I may discover what the mystery is."

"You will hear a thousand different tales, perhaps. Or none at all. It has not been happy for those who have spoken of—birds." Kagowo scraped his inshooting chin. "There was a funeral only yesterday. *Hai!* If I were you, my friend, I should—return to Japan."

Westgaard stood up.

"There are too many words, and not enough sense to this," he said in disgust. "You will have transportation arranged for me? In the morning?"

"The man will be at the hotel. Which hotel? Wherever you stop will be reported to us, naturally. Now, will I see you again? No? I will say good-by, then. I trust that—when I see you again, you will appear as you are now."

"I hope to keep my head on my shoulders," Westgaard agreed, grinning.

"Who spoke of—heads? What happens, happens. And who can know from the blossoms what the fruit will be?"

"Who indeed?" Westgaard agreed.

IV

MUMAKA was waiting for him in the lower corridor of the building, and Westgaard came on him in no good temper.

"Have you found where we sleep tonight?" the white man asked, although Mumaka had not been requested to find the foreign-style hotel. "Or do you wish to sleep as you do now, standing?"

"I have found nothing," Mumaka retorted. "And, from your face, you have discovered as much! *Mah!* As we walked to this place I saw an inn that would do as well as any other. Shall I take you there?"

Westgaard imagined very well what his boy's taste would be, but what differenec did it make for a night?

"Show it to me," he ordered.

When they were at the door of the inn, Westgaard told Mumaka to go back to the pier and see that his scant baggage was sent up at once. From the arched entrance to the tiny rock-garden the inn might have been one in any fair-sized north-Japan village. The same inn-slippers at the door, the same square, matting-floored room hermetically sealed by wooden outer walls, all of the sliding type, and paper *shoji* inner partitions.

Westgaard undressed and slipped on one

of the inn's house-kimonos; clapped for a bath, the last he believed he might get for some time. When the innkeeper's wife came to show the way, the white man knew that he was in transplanted Japan.

A shadow projected upon the glazed glass of the bathroom door proved that the place was in use, but the little woman slid the door wide open and invited Westgaard to enter. In the oblong room, on the wet and steaming floor beside the wooden tub, stood another man, a Japanese, clothed in a parboiled skin and a broad grin of greeting. On the wall near him hung a thick large towel that would have made a toga for him, but he was too well bred to take advantage in personal activity while entertaining a stranger.

He bowed and begged Westgaard with a gesture to make himself comfortable, and then remained smiling as serenely as if he had been a king of Graustark blazing with decorations and ornately attired. The innkeeper's wife showed Westgaard where the soap was kept, and the cold water with which to cool his cooked flesh after he came from the boiling tub; she asked the Japanese if he had found his sleeping-chamber comfortable, and at what hour he would eat.

Westgaard stood about ill at ease; he did not feel furiously modest, for he had lived in Japan for many years, but now, as often before, he was sensate that the Japanese wanted to know if it were true that *seiyo-jin* were actually white all over.

The conversation between the man and woman became casually general. Westgaard decided uncomfortably that the two thought him playing the part of a prudish fool. He started hot water out of a bamboo pipe into the tub, and then joined the conversation with a disarming smile.

"Will the birds fly tonight?" he asked.

"*Mah!*" the Japanese ejaculated, and, not stopping for his kimono nor sandals, was out of the room.

The innkeeper's wife was through the door a hop before him, although considering the speed he had gathered, that seemed an impossible feat.

Westgaard thought placidly, "Everything has its advantages," and proceeded to bathe.

Back in his room, warm and soothed, Westgaard began to mull over this incident. Both man and woman had been guilty of discourtesy; not in remaining so long in the bathroom, but in their manner of leaving. The innkeeper's wife, who brought tea to him in his own room, had done it nervously, and her fright was more than apparent. Westgaard decided that there was pretty good evidence that the tale—whatever it was—had a general circulation.

He dressed in high good humor—the first for days.

No nearer any solution to the problem that confronted him, yet he was beginning to see that the working out of it might result in complications, and that there was a possibility of their proving interesting. Mumaka, full of importance, clattered into the room as Westgaard knotted his necktie.

"I rode up with the baggage," he announced excitedly. "But while I was walking to the steamer, I discovered a little something. It is as strange as the time the head priest found four red grains of rice before one of the temple deer died from overeating! It reminds me of—"

"You will strangle with words some day," Westgaard grunted. "What was it you say, talker?"

"Never can I tell a story as I wish," Mumaka mourned. "I was going to get you very excited, and then—but have it your way. You remember, *danna-san*, your asking me about birds? Crows? On the way as I walked, passed some shops—*hail* but they make them of stones of red here!—and being in a hurry—" virtuously—"I did not stop, even for a mouthful of food. But at an ornament shop I saw something queer. Since I have been raised in a temple, I know a thing when I see it! I saw a little image of a goddess, but—make of this what you want!—there was an empty place beside her, where the sacred crow should roost! It is very unlucky to destroy a messenger of a goddess. That is what the crow is. And so I entered the shop and looked about.

" 'Ho!' I said, and picked up a piece of poor lacquer. 'This is very honorably bad workmanship. How much do you want for it?'

"Before he could answer, I picked up the image. 'Honorable bad luck to destroy a god-thing,' I said. When I had it in my fingers I saw that the crow had been hammered off, or cut, perhaps.

"Did the shopkeeper apologize to me? Never in the world! He called me a lout

and a meddler—that was the best he called me! Pig-child was one. Tail of a snake was another. All of the time he screamed at me—in a whisper—he kept pushing me from the door and into the street; then he slid the door behind me and locked it! What do you make of that, *danna-san?*"

"There seems much foolishness about crows in this place," Westgaard said thoughtfully. "I have heard some of it, but not enough to tell you about. You and I will see this cursing shopkeeper, whose words may be made more pleasant after he has bitten a gold yen. Then we will see if we can get a man or two to go with us tomorrow."

Westgaard stooped, and picked up his cap from a low cupboard which stood against the wall. With his other hand he reached into the cap.

"Is this the kind of crow that was missing on the image, Mumaka?" he asked softly, holding up a small, red, many-clawed crow.

"*Hai!* What foolishness have we here?" Mumaka snorted. "You listened to my story, and all the time you knew of it, for you had bought the bird yourself. I see clearly now! You offered the shop-fellow money, and he cut the bird away from the goddess for you—and now he fears ill luck! You have made a fool of me, *danna-san.*"

"No," Westgaard said. "Somebody is trying to make a fool of me." He clapped his hands three times. "I have never seen this before," he told Mumaka. "But we will try and see how it came here."

The innkeeper himself bowed his way into the room.

"What is this thing?" Westgaard snapped. "And how did it get here?"

The innkeeper mumbled to himself a moment. He said, then:

"This is a poor inn for *danna-san.* There are many better ones. I know of one with beautiful serving-girls and the softest matting in—"

"*Danna-san* is satisfied where he is," Westgaard said shortly. "Nor is he to be frightened away by placing a metal bird in his room. How did it get here?"

The innkeeper blinked.

" 'Where does the wind blow from?' " he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

Westgaard saw nothing to be gained on that tack. He shrugged as expressively as the Japanese, and said—

"What does it mean?"

The Japanese began to chatter with fear.

"Does it mean ill to me?" Westgaard questioned.

The other moved a wry mouth, as if that were something he had not thought of. He choked out, "To *me* as well," stared about the room in obvious agony, walled his eyes at Mumaka as if seeking help there, and suddenly turned and fled, without a single bow.

"I have seen school-babies with more courage," Mumaka asserted. "I know nothing of this crow affair, and so am not frightened by it. I think this fool knows too much."

"No—he knows too little," Westgaard thought aloud. "He's heard some story—what, I don't know. All of these people have heard it, Mumaka. All in the city, it seems, save you and I. We'll see this shopkeeper, and possibly find out."

Mumaka thrust out his chest.

"We will wring the last egg from this crow," he said grandly, and waited for Westgaard to precede him from the room.

They found the shopkeeper's door open again, but when the man saw Mumaka he began to tremble, and at the sight of Westgaard he shook all over; he shook out of him just two words, "*Achi ike!* Go away!" and neither the promise of money nor the assurance of blows could get more from him.

"He is a bowl of mush!" Mumaka hooted, and Westgaard was of the same opinion; the Japanese was truly frightened dumb.

He argued with the shopkeeper, he pleaded and begged, holding up yen after yen to loosen the fellow's tongue, he pelted him with curses while Mumaka applauded silently, but to no avail.

"*Hai!*" Mumaka whispered in his master's ear, "some one has told him to be silent!"

"Some one—or some thing has certainly frightened him," Westgaard agreed.

He tackled the man from that angle, explaining that nothing would be allowed to hurt him if he spoke; when Westgaard asked him flatly who had ordered him to remain silent there was no answering flicker in the man's dull eyes, and Westgaard realized that he had drawn a blank.

"Whatever the yarn is, he's scared to death," he muttered. "There's nothing to be learned here."

He stalked out of the shop. Mumaka, behind him, made expressively insulting

faces at the other Japanese, pulled his mouth wide with his fingers, and through his stretched lips waggled his protruding tongue.

Westgaard, as he walked toward the waterfront, marshalled what little plan he had. It had not been forbidden him to offer Chinese or native coolies more money than the monopoly paid them—which was small. Good; he would wait until he got into the hills, and actually in a camphor camp, and then collect a gang. Take them with him to wherever it was he could get the stuff, wherever he was taken, or shown the way.

In the meantime, he wanted a coolie or two to go with him from Taihoku—preferably one who knew something of camphor. It wasn't absolutely necessary, but he wanted a baggage-carrier so Mumaka could be freed of that and remain with him; it would do no harm, either, to spring that crow song he'd sung before and see what happened.

And what better place for either than in some drinking-shop? And where was he more certain of finding one than near the shipping? It came to him that he might get some Japanese, even, in spite of Kagowo's warning; some Japanese who was sailing to Japan again, but would remain for a price.

V

THERE was a sign before the place Westgaard selected to enter. The drinking shop—*gyu-ya*—went by the name of the White Dove of Heaven, but was little lovelier for that. Even Mumaka made a grimace as Westgaard pushed open the swinging door and the combined odors of cigarets and stale whisky and staler perspiration edged solidly into the chill outer air. Two lamps flickered and flared gloomily, drenched almost to extinction in the fumes of tobacco. Under one of them, at the head of a bare table, a pimple-faced Japanese dealt liquor out of a cask, and his full ladle touched no cup until a coin had been first shined on his nose, and then tested doubly by biting.

The place was well filled. Every seat on the benches about the table was occupied. Two of the patrons slept as they sat side by side; one of them had his head pillowed on his arms and sprawled over the table's top, the other used him as support as he snored dolefully, "Moooo*ah*, moooo*ah*," but awoke with a start each time the man at the cask rapped on the table, and was able to push his cup toward the host. In a far corner some drinker had reached the singing stage, and wailed of a distant pine-tree in a nasal minor. None noticed him; none noticed anything save the business of drinking.

Mumaka whispered:

"I do not like this place, *danna-san*. Let us go away! *Hayo!* Quickly!"

The white man, in the place now, shook his head. He said, in a low voice:

"Drink nothing, Mumaka. It will poison you."

A glance about, at the men, told him nothing; almost all were ordinary coolies, and Japanese, although it was impossible to tell pure blood from that mixed with Chinese or Malayan, Westgaard believed that he would get nothing for his pains in the place.

He stepped to the pimple-faced Japanese, who looked up at him blankly.

"I want a coolie—two," Westgaard suggested. "A yen to you for each one."

"Three yen," the other mumbled.

"You will get me two men for it?"

"Two. Yes."

"You seem sensible," Westgaard said. "If—"

"I am. Three yen. In my hand. Come!"

Grinning, Westgaard paid him.

The Japanese went through the nose-shining, coin-biting ceremony, and was satisfied that the money was genuine.

"Where do they go?" he asked.

Westgaard wanted the men. He said easily—

"With three yen in hand, what do you care?"

The host thought that over. The process seemed painful, but he finally muttered, "I do not care," and ran his eyes about the table.

"Which do you want?" he demanded. "All owe me money. You will pay five day's wage in advance—that is the law. To me. It is owed me."

"What law?"

"What matter? Mine, if you will. Well?"

In the interval before Westgaard replied the Japanese ladled cups to the brim and pushed them along the table. All save the man who slept on his arms responded, and

sucking inhalations made a horrible sound, like wind in a cavern.

"Give me the men," Westgaard agreed.

"First I have my pay."

Westgaard put a hand in his pocket, and drew it out empty.

"They will go where you tell them?"

"They will go. Anywhere. Anywhere this side of the *aiyu-sen*, for any work. Yes."

"But beyond the guard-line—you do not guarantee that?"

The Japanese spat through his teeth. He looked out of the corner of an eye at the white man, clucked to himself, and then said—

"Well, I do not give you back the three yen, *seiyo-jin*."

From which Westgaard saw that the Japanese would not make guarantee. He reached down and took the fellow by the neck of his kimono, and lifted him off the stool on which he sat; held him so that eye was level to eye.

"I do not like your talk," Westgaard said quietly.

The Japanese did not blink an eye, although he guessed from Mumaka's movement of the hand that the *seiyo-jin's* servant was holding a knife beneath his kimono. He did not kick nor wriggle, but said grimly:

"It does no good, *seiyo-jin*. I like gold as well as—you. You would pay for men. But they will not go. Or, going, they run away. I can do nothing for you. Set me down."

Westgaard, beaten, set him down hard on the stool.

Save the two sleepers, every pair of eyes had raised and lowered with the host's brief journey, yet none moved to help him.

"They do not love you," Westgaard said.

"They hate me—which is better," the other assured him. "Otherwise they would have had your purse from your pocket and your neck slit, in less time than it takes to tell about."

Westgaard, having seen the faces about the room, agreed, but said nothing. Mumaka tapped him on the arm, and drew Westgaard a few paces from the host.

"He is too smart, that one," Mumaka said. "See him—he has your three yen out, and shows it to those fools about him, who, wanting drink, laugh like cackling hens. Say something of the crows, *danna-san*, and see if it will silence them."

The white man had not appreciated the money that had been extorted. He marked the door behind him, and that it would swing outward as well as in, and then walked slowly back to the liquor-ladler.

"Give me my three yen," he said.

The Japanese tucked the coins out of sight.

"Take them," he suggested, winking about the table. "I thought you would say something like that, and I mentioned it to my—friends here. I told them one of the yen is to be their own, and to be taken out in drink. So I say to you, *seiyo-jin*, take them, if you can."

Westgaard was not so sure he could.

"You had better be careful," Westgaard said. "The crows will get you if you don't watch out."

No outburst, no movement, greeted his experimental speech. But the stinking room became very quiet, and increasingly alert; Westgaard could hear the drip from the cask's spigot like single drops of rain on a tin roof. The singer stopped his song as suddenly as when a phonograph needle is lifted from the record. The snorer no longer droned. Heads turned to face the big *seiyo-jin*, and remained in that position. Street sounds came into the room—the shrill ringing of some bicycler's bell, the cry of a vender of hot macaroni.

Knowing the nearness of the door, Westgaard did not feel foolhardy. He grinned impartially at them all. Behind him he could hear Mumaka's breath whistle excitedly against his teeth.

AT THE instant that the pimple-faced one was whispering that the *seiyo-jin's* gold was their own if they took it, Westgaard was thinking that it would have been wise had he left some of his paper money, or nearly all of it, with Kagowo. With the exception of the one sleeper, the benches emptied, every man jumping backward and then toward Westgaard. The bare table, puddled with slopped-over whisky, made an alley through the room.

Westgaard whirled for the door, bumped into Mumaka, who was a half-second slower, lost balance from the impact, grasped at Mumaka to steady himself, to find that the boy had already gotten out of reach and was through the swinging door; the lunge of his arm sent him sprawling forward. As he

lost balance completely he yelled unconsciously, "——!" in English.

As if this were the word which unloosed hidden mechanism, the sleeper at the bare table jerked erect, stiffly, automotonlike; jerked erect with his arms still half pillowing his head, entirely away from his sides. A thrown knife, intended unerringly for Westgaard, took the wakened man squarely under the arm, and he sat bolt upright for a split second, and then dropped to the table again, as if continuing his interrupted nap.

As Westgaard fell he flung himself about as best he could, and took the first of the coolies face to face. The new impact took him to the floor, and, as body after body fell upon him, he could see nothing of the room's light. Yet, in some strange way, he had seen the face of the former sleeper, and had known it for what it was—white.

The very press of bodies was saving. There was never room enough to even slide a knife into him diagonally. Westgaard lay still, and made no move save to fasten his big hands about the neck just above him, and squeeze it. He felt the man grow limp, and began to experiment; he lifted the fellow's body and was rewarded by having the weight above him become frantic with striving.

Very slowly, he held the Japanese' figure higher, and so got the first breath of air; he had almost suffocated in the fetid stench of unwashed bodies. He lay quietly after that, fairly well protected, but was careful to draw his knees in, that the long legs did not give him away, by showing his true position.

They squealed and yelled above him. Several, less brave than the rest — the pimple-faced Japanese among them—ran around the outside of the pile, and shouted, not too loudly, in praise of the valiance of their companions. Westgaard knew he was safe, as long as he was where he was—but how long could he stay there? When the mass of arms and legs disintegrated, a knife would find him out.

He wondered where Mumaka was. If the boy had run for help, and help came, well and good. If Mumaka had been foolish enough to try and help him, alone, he had certainly been taken care of, and silently. Either way, Mumaka was out of it. The Japanese and half-breeds grunted as they went about their work.

As Westgaard feared, the weight above him began to lighten. He could hear the host's orders for no noise, and for speed. For the first, the coolies were cautious, and none disentangled himself until he was certain it was not the big *seiyo-jin* beneath or beside him; for the other, it was done.

They no longer shouted nor ejaculated, and, in the first wierd moment of quiet Westgaard heard something that brought him unbelievably to his knees, still submerged, but fighting now for the first time, gone almost completely berserk. He had the limp coolie still by the neck, and battered him back and forth to gain an inch of room; given that, he heaved himself erect, spilling coolies at every movement.

What he had heard, gasped, was this—

"Our Father, Which art in heaven—"

And Westgaard was on his feet, fighting at last, taking every fool chance that he would not take for himself, since it had not been wise.

He swung the coolie's body like a whip about him, and had a space to himself. Across this, in less than a second, a knife whizzed, and Westgaard took it with his suddenly-improvised shield. He flung the coolie from him, and dropped two others with it, and before another knife was thrown, was in their midst. He was insensible to pain, and cared nothing for punishment.

Hands scratched at his eyes from behind his back, a brave spirit tried to give him the cross-buttock but could not move the white man's shifting bulk; his arms were pinioned once by three, and he was half overborne from behind, but he tore himself loose, whirled and followed the three with a swift battering hail of blows. Knives were thrown and used, but the white man was never still, and gave no sure target.

He was ripped in the forearm so that blood ran down it, and in consequence left a red splash on faces where his fist drove home. If a coolie were slow he would seize him, and whip him to the floor or to a corner. One he smashed into a lamp, which, swinging wildly, winked out, leaving the room dimmer than before. It was almost impossible to tell the white man from the others; here Westgaard had the advantage, for all were against him.

His new rage was tremendous and actually might have carried him to success. The pimple-faced den owner cried the coolies on feverishly. He had his story ready now: The *seiyo-jin* had become very drunk

and so had begun to fight. *All seiyo-jin* were crazy, even as the silent one who had been drinking from the cask for days and made little payment; *that* one, the host believed, was settled for. The owner was skilled in the time it took to die, and from the *seiyo-jin's* gurgling it would not take much longer. If only they could drop this yellow-haired devil—

The door swung open, and Mumaka's excited face appeared, then ducked out swiftly, and a starched white policeman took his place.

"*Mah!*" he ejaculated, and stopped.

Westgaard was, at that moment, herding some six coolies into a corner.

The little policeman raised his voice. "Stop, *chikusho me!* Beasts!'" he shrieked, and, at the new voice, Westgaard, although only half hearing, whirled about, and found that his work was over.

The owner of the drinking-shop came groveling to the officer, his mouth dribbling with words, but the other shut him with a snarl. The swinging door was wide open, and faces, mouths agape, peered in curiously. They, as well as the officer, saw the last act of the performance.

Westgaard had leaped to the table and had his arm around the other *seiyo-jin*. As he lifted the man's head some one in the crowd said that the faces looked alike—that is, they were both white, once, but now one was covered with mud and filth, and the other with drying blood, already black at the edges. Westgaard's shirt was gone entirely, and his body was crisscrossed where nails had dug, missed their hold and scratched across the white flesh. His blond hair was sooty and grimy from the dirt and litter of the floor; his blue eyes seemed to have turned black.

As the dying man's head was lifted gently, his eyes lost some of their glaze, and his lips moved, although Westgaard could catch none of the words. He saw that despite the fellow white's appearance and stubby beard that he was young—twenty-five perhaps, or thirty; no more. The man's lips twisted feebly again, and Westgaard lowered his bloody head.

"What?" he asked in a curious harsh tone.

The other gabbled, "Gaaa!" and the sound made Westgaard shiver.

"I'm a white man," Westgaard insisted commandingly. "Who are you, man? What are you?" Westgaard's inherent gentleness voiced itself in a strained, grating speech, "You're dying, old man—tell me who you are!"

Eyes, feeble, unlighted, took sudden life.

"Our Father—" he said again, and as if that opened a channel of his mind, mumbled, "Father—Harrison—come cam—camphor—Heald—home want—to go—couldn't—couldn't—" and drooled into silence.

Westgaard tried to summon the spark to blaze. His own eyes were smoldering, although he was guessing at what the other tried so desperately to tell him.

"Heald? Heald of the company? He sent you here after camphor? And when you couldn't get it he wouldn't send you coin to come home?"

The dying man tried to nod, or so Westgaard thought.

He spoke again:

"Home—home—couldn't go—tried again—and—" his voice bellying up like a sail before the wind—"found—I—they—" in a piercing cry—"the' sun—sun—sun-crows!"

A brief shiver went through him, and Westgaard started to bite his lips. Then the dreary voice said again:

"Take—my—hand—I am—afraid—"

He said nothing after that.

"*Shinda!*" Mumaka stuttered. "He is very dead."

WESTGAARD'S lips showed a new trickle where he had bitten them. He stooped, and lifted the form of the white man that was, and grunted to Mumaka to get a baggage-cart—anything.

"Where do you take—it?" the awed officer asked as Westgaard and his burden came past him.

"Home!" Westgaard snapped, thinking far into the future. "Home, fool!"

They would have stopped Westgaard at the inn, had they dared. The white man, still burdened, marched grimly past the protesting innkeeper, his wife and every servant, and laid the man who once had been called Harrison on the matting. While Mumaka bound up his knifed arm and washed blood from his face and body, Westgaard sat smoking a cigaret so rapidly that the tube was hot to his fingers, and sparks of tobacco flew from the burning end.

"I can't take him anywhere like that,'

Westgaard said suddenly. "I've got to change his clothes. I—I've got to. He looks like —— the way he is."

"It would be very unlucky," Mumaka prophesied. "It is so written in the book of—"

"Open my trunk," Westgaard said. "He needs a suit of clothes, and so do I." At Mumaka's hesitation at taking part Westgaard threw at him. "Are you a man, or still a priest?"

"A man," Mumaka insisted, but his teeth clattered. He opened the trunk, however, and helped Westgaard strip the man of his rags, and even to wash the smeared face. "He has been as he is for many days," Mumaka said, glad of the sound of his voice.

"For many days," Westgaard repeated, and Mumaka wondered at his master's grim tone.

"A clean shirt," the white man ordered, while Mumaka, rapidly losing his measure of courage, said that there was such a thing as carrying a matter too far.

"Here, then, give it to me," Westgaard said. "Or, no; I'll lift him, and you slip it over his head."

Westgaard stopped in his unpleasant, necessary labor; grunted, and then snarled, as he looked at the bare back—

"You see what I see, boy?"

"I see," Mumaka whimpered. "I see, *danna-san*."

Both, as if fascinated, kept their eyes on what fascinated them—the old, deep scars, six inches each, that had been made by the claws of some huge cat-animal. Or bird.

"Put—a coat over him," Westgaard said. "I've had enough—of this. And enough of mystery. I'm going to see Kagowo. It isn't five yet. He'll be in his office." He looked thoughtfully at Mumaka, and then added kindly, "You can come with me, if you want, boy."

Mumaka came.

Westgaard wasted no words on Kagowo.

"Do you know of a white man named Harrison?" he asked, the moment he was in the other's office.

Kagowo nodded.

"Yes. He went into the interior, although I warned him; he was very secretive, being young, and said nothing of his business. We guessed he wanted camphor. He went—and has not returned. I gave orders to find him, to several stations of men along the guard-line, but nothing was seen of him."

"He's dead," Westgaard said.

"Doubtless," Kagowo agreed.

"Doubtless. I have seen him."

"Now there will be a writing of explanations, and a visiting of officials, and I am sick to death of their questions. You are *sure* he is dead? Many go to the interior and do not come out for months—but, there, you have seen him. Where is he?"

"In my room." Westgaard added slowly. "He was in a drinking-shop, Kagowo-san, where I went for coolies. I didn't know he was white. Somebody hit him with a knife meant for me. Before I forget—" handing him a packet—"please keep this money for me. He's dead, well enough. But, Kagowo-san, he took something with him when he died, some words you and I would like to hear."

"I will hear enough of it!"

Instinctively Westgaard leaned close to the other, although he did not lower his voice.

"He did not die happily, Kagowo-san! But that is not all. Listen! On his back are marks, like those made by some great animal. But it was no animal, or he would have borne tooth-marks as well—and a cat with a hold like that would have never let him go, even if somebody'd killed it. So—"

He left the rest unsaid.

"I will go and see this thing," Kagowo decided. "You think—?"

"I don't know what to think!"

"Nor I," the official told him. "Sometimes I believe thought is not healthy, Westgaard-san. If I thought too much about the little crow that I found in my bed a week ago, when I was asking a question or two—"

"That honor was paid me," Westgaard said as they walked down the hall. "Somebody left one in my cap."

Kagowo broke into a run, casting about for a rickshaw vainly.

"None when you want them," he panted. "Which way do we go? Hurry, my friend, or—"

He saved his breath for running.

What Kagowo had thought was apparent the moment they were in Westgaard's room. It was empty of all save silence.

Kagowo sent for the innkeeper, his wife

and every servant. He raged and bullied until they lost their little store of wit and sagged like rain-pelted sunflowers; at last, learning nothing save that they knew just that, he lost his temper in earnest, and mouthed curses, in which they, their ancestors, and any descendants they might dare ever to have were heavily involved. He drove them bodily from the room to finish with.

"Mah!" he said. "I think they lie—but what can I do about it?"

"Nothing," Westgaard confirmed. "I should have stayed here, and sent Mumaka with a message."

"It would have been better. But, then, your boy might not have arrived with it, and then we would have two dead ones instead of one! I am thinking—hmm!—the boat goes in the morning, Westgaard-san! There is no room on it, but I will see that you have the captain's cabin. What do you say?"

"The train goes in the morning," Westgaard said mildly. "I will be on it."

Kagowo muttered something about "bird-seed," patted Westgaard's arm once or twice, glanced about the room, felt in the pocket of his overcoat where Westgaard could make out the outline of a gun, said abruptly, "You are armed?" and, not waiting for Westgaard's nod, nodded himself as if the question had been needless; in short, exhibited every sign of a man close to panic. Westgaard smiled, and walked with Kagowo to the entrance door. He said nothing, but the little Japanese, striving valiantly to be game, took heart from the other's taut grin, and actually achieved a sort of grimace in return.

When Westgaard turned to go to his room again, he found that Mumaka was at his back; that the boy would not stay in the room alone. Westgaard did not blame him.

"I'll dress, Mumaka, and then you and I will go somewhere else and eat."

Mumaka said sharply:

"Did you think I would let you eat here, *danna-san?* Are there no poisons left in the world?"

There was sense in that, Westgaard decided; it gave him a new notion, and one he was not fond of because it seemed expressive of fear; Mumaka realized what his master intended doing when he saw him load his pockets with socks, and put on three shirts, one over the other. The trunk would remain where it was, but his *danna-san* would sleep elsewhere. Westgaard, satisfied that he did not bulge too much, clapped; the innkeeper's wife, driven to answering by her lord, came as far as the threshold.

"I have some little business outside, said Westgaard, "I will return later."

"I got to eat," Westgaard said. "I will return later."

"Later," she echoed.

As they left, both heard her feet pattering down the hall, hurried by fear. Westgaard was not sure which end of the hall she was afraid of—his, or the invisible termination of the dim panel-lined passage.

VI

THE hills near Taihoku, unlike those of Japan, were uncultivated, although they were densely green with low bushes. Rice spread everywhere on the bottomlands over which the train ran; rice-fields, and acres of green mounds of graves, with here and there a patch of stone horseshoe-shaped ones. Along the wide, poorly paved roads bullock-carts and coolie-carts ambled.

In a half-hour the fields grew orderly, rows of beans or sugar-cane, sweet potatoes and indigo marched from the track in military order. Each station was like its preceding fellow, the very station trees trimmed of foliage as alike as the hair of boys in an orphanage. Men stood at attention at cross-roads and switches, waving the train on with green and red flags.

In the fields old men and women, and children too young to wield a hoe, waved dirty white rags on the ends of poles to keep marauding birds from the crops. The engine was challenged by water-buffaloes—carabao—who resented the trespasser on their domain but always thought better of their belligerence and floundered back into the mud.

Westgaard had, as Kagowo promised, been given a guide, a taciturn Japanese who answered only such questions as a nod or shake of the head would care for. Even Mumaka could not draw him into conversation, and early gave over. At Karihito, the guide—who did not proffer his name—grunted, and indicated by a movement of his hands that they were to leave the metergage train.

Here venders in green caps paraded the platform, howling their blandishments—beeru, seedar, matchi, aisucreemu; backed to the loading-part were four-wheeled carts, with small wheels in front and immense ones behind. Cantonese women with flowers in their hair. Foochow women with three-dagger hairdress, women of Amoy and Swatow jostled the Formosan countrywomen, some of whom had dressed their coarse black hair into a clumsy exaggeration of the style of Japan. All save the few Japanese chewed betel-leaf and driveled the juice from gaping mouths. Baggage was handled by coolies in trousers, jackets and mushroom hats, the women indistinguishable from the men.

Westgaard looked about him with interest. For the first time he realized that he was no longer in Japan, and that here was a polyglot people he did not understand.

It made him more satisfied with the plan he had decided upon on his last night in Taihoku; decided upon while Mumaka slept, and while he himself had placed his gun beside him on the matting. There was, he had realized, only one possible thing to do: If, in the district to which the silent guide was taking him, he could find camphor trees, and should be able to assure Kagowo and the other officials in Taihoku that it was safe to exploit, they should be willing to give him men who knew the work. That was the only chance open to him. How safe this district was he could only guess from the condition of the man called Harrison.

He owed Heald another payment for that! That poor kid, sent on an impossible job, impossible, Westgaard feared, even to a man knowing the Orient; the poor kid, to have been—what? Natives, even head-hunters, Westgaard was not especially afraid of. Animals were not bullet-proof. Birds could be shot. What, then, had made a gibbering idiot of Harrison?

But if he, Westgaard, got in and came out again, certainly Kagowo would give him men, and allow him to take them back. That was his plan, nor could he better it.

There was a long wait in the town, which, while orderly and Japanese, was compact under Chinese roofs, and still retained, if not the protecting wall, the three-storied Chinese gates at each of the five entering roads.

Westgaard wandered about, with Mumaka at his heels and the guide shuffling along behind both and, as he walked, grew more and more uninterested. What Mumaka had called, in Okonai, the "strange language" Westgaard recognized as a Chinese dialect. Fukien, he guessed; he noticed that while all of the older Formosans used this, the children spoke only Japanese.

The white man had a sudden notion.

"Mumaka," he said in a whisper, "the next time we meet a *Shina-san*, or one of these island people, you go to him, and say, 'How do we go to the station?' in the language they use. When he tells you, ask him this, 'Are there big crows in this place?' and tell me what he says."

"It may be the wrong man I ask," Mumaka dissented. "And, besides, it shows we know too much. It is not wise, *danna-san*."

"Ask anyhow," Westgaard ordered.

They went ahead a hundred paces; Westgaard nudged Mumaka as an old man, obviously a native, in spite of his ragged kimono, came out of a shop; Mumaka edged up and accosted him.

"*Hai*, grandfather!" he said. "We have lost our way. Where is the place of the iron trains?"

Courteously, the ancient directed him.

Mumaka thanked him profusely. As they bowed to each other, Mumaka asked humbly—

"Are there any great birds—crows—in this town?"

The old man seemed to choke, and the yellow of his face turned to gray; in a moment he became normal and natural again, and smiled sadly at Mumaka.

"I am very old," he said. "I will die soon, for I have not the money to make life-prolonging payments to the doctor, and so he can not keep me well. And so I tell you this, youngster; they are here, although I have never seen them. You are well fed. You would make a pleasant tidbit for them."

"*Mah!*" the boy ejaculated.

"It is worse than that," the old man agreed.

"Have you — ever seen them — flying about?" Mumaka asked, and, following Westgaard's system, gave the old man a coin.

"I have food and a place to sleep at a grandson's," the ancient said gravely. "But this coin I will give to a doctor I

know of, and for it he will prevent my getting sick and dying. And since I can thus prolong my life, boy, I will tell you no more —or I would lose it. *Hee!* The matter is changed."

"Have you—" Mumaka began, but the other was already shuffling away.

"I am a fool," the boy muttered to Westgaard, when they were walking ahead again. "I was about to hear something, but I stopped his mouth with money. But I know this, *danna-san*. There are these birds here, and the old one fears them. What he said was only because he believed he would die anyhow! They are here, and now they know we know of them. It was a mistake."

"We will not be here long," Westgaard said. "It is nearly time for the train. That dumb idiot held up five fingers when we turned this corner. He probably means five o'clock."

The train from Karahito began to climb almost as soon as it left the town; the low foot-hills were covered with tea-plants, and the train ran over wooden bridges that spanned fiercely flowing streams, where the water roiled against huge rocks. The engineer hooted again and again for tunnels and, as if liking the important screech of his whistle, held the cord down almost all of the way through each. The jagged peaks, the only naked part of the scenery, for all else was covered with dense growth, made Westgaard think of the high Sierras.

THAT night he had his first experience in a Formosan inn, in a town over the hills and in the narrow, sparsely inhabited central valley of Taiwan.

He surrendered his shoes—only relic of Japanese practise—at the foot of a ladder-like stairway leading upward from an earth-floored shop in which the innkeeper sold food, and mounted the dirt-encrusted steps in a pair of filthy slippers. Along the second-story corridor, so narrow that he was forced to turn his shoulders sidewise, were shallow rooms, almost entirely taken up with sections of splintery floor raised two feet above the rest and covered with thin rice-straw mats. On each of these bulges lay men or women, or both, all fully dressed, all smoking; some quarreled, some talked in querulous high-pitched voices.

In one corner of Westgaard's room, which he shared with eight others, was a small clogged sink, in which tea-dishes, clothes, and black rags made a hillock clear to the fouled faucet. Westgaard found that the faucet was only symbolic, and that it had probably not run water for years.

With Mumaka beside him, he rested as best he could. Through the night the other guests smoked and scratched—with cause—and talked, once to the point of physical argument. Westgaard raised on one elbow to watch, but at the last moment, Chinese fashion, the near-combatants proved that they understood the better part of valor. Mumaka slept heavily, although he scratched even in his sleep, but the white man was still awake when the nameless guide appeared and beckoned him from the room.

If sleep had been impossible, the morning's food was worse. Not even Mumaka could dip a chopstick into the mess the innkeeper offered, and, since there was no eating-shop in the village, master and man breakfasted on tea. Westgaard had his first qualm about the future purchasing of food, a thing always available in Japanese mountains. He spoke of this to the taciturn Japanese, who expanded sufficiently to mutter a word, *tabeyo*—you will eat; at this Mumaka glanced at his master, received a nod, and, at the first of the village's two food shops, bolted inside, to return with a cloth bag slung over his shoulder.

"I was cheated," Mumaka said. "But there was no time to bargain. We can eat—or live, anyhow—for many days, for I have bought both rice and dried fish."

The guide waggled his head, as if saddened by such foolish preparation and by the doubting of his word. He led the way to the first narrow street which the narrow-gage track traversed, then lifted his voice and showed unexpected and hidden power, for he bellowed like a bull calf:

"*Koi! Koi!*"

AT THE summons a hand-car, pushed by a Formosan bare to the thigh, appeared around the corner and was trundled down the track. It consisted of a platform five feet square set on a four-wheeled truck, in the middle of which was a box to serve as a seat. Westgaard and Mumaka mounted to this and sat, while the guide squatted between their legs, all facing forward. The single pusher grunted, and started the car; from the ease

with which he kept it in motion Westgaard realized that either the track was level or on a very slight incline.

Water-buffalo performed their labors ponderously; others grazed at the scanty grass of grave-mounds or paddy-dikes. Only one difference marked idler and worker: The first had a solitary black bird on his back, the second, a faded and tattered young Formosan, stretched at full length, head comfortably settled against the beast's broad rump. At little clusters of huts the superstructure of the hand-car was changed to another car, propelled by another pusher. Westgaard was struck by the fact that while the Formosans were outwardly like ordinary Chinese coolies, yet they were grimmer-visaged, as if they hid under an impassive obedience a stern, repressed hatred of alien races.

At length the almost dead level gave way to slopes growing steadily steeper, with lesser descents between them, down which the car coasted at alarming speed. The straight track now began to twist and wind in an effort to find easy ascents; there came long bridges of piles and bamboo, over roaring streams. At the next division-station two pushers took the place of the solitary one; until Westgaard actually examined them he did not realize that one was a woman, so thoroughly were they concealed by loose jackets and cotton trousers and mushroom hats of leaves and bamboo splints.

Tea-fields began, dense low bushes in closely planted rows, showing evidences of recent reduction by the burning off of former jungle from wilderness to civilization. In a clump of thicket between fields Westgaard saw the first member of a mountain tribe, a youth dressed in a single blanket-like garment, carrying bow and arrows, with a huge knife in a half-section of bamboo as scabbard hanging at his thigh.

As the hand-car passed him he watched it scornfully, then, with a queer gesture of his arms, akin to the flapping of a bird's wings, disappeared. Westgaard turned to the guide and found that worthy shaking as if with ague.

"Cold?" Westgaard asked solemnly.

Fright had unlocked the guide's locked mouth-muscles.

"They grow braver and braver since the gods and devils help them," he said.

"Brave enough to come clear to Taihoku," Westgaard said, satisfied with the guide's words.

Westgaard grinned thoughtfully when the guide frankly huddled closer to him.

The first camphor camp had four shops, a half-dozen Japanese police and several hundred huts; the second divided all of these numbers in half; the last, at which the hand-car could go no farther in its paralleling course along the mountain, had a lone shop and no more than twenty huts. Tame natives strutted about in it half-naked, although some of the women wore kimonos and spoke some Japanese, from which Westgaard drew his own deduction. There was no gaiety in the town. Even children played doggedly and without a smile.

The guide shuffled ahead of Westgaard, and showed him the largest hut in the village. He bowed, snarled one word which Westgaard did not understand and scuttled back to the hand-car; Westgaard heard him bellow at the coolie, heard the grate of steel wheels being pulled from the track, and the subsequent clicks as they were set on again, the pant as the two pushers started it on its way again.

"That one has rice-paste where his heart should be," Mumaka giggled. "He talked too much, *danna-san!* He told what he did not mean to."

Westgaard nodded.

"He was frightened," Mumaka continued. "Every sound that he kept bottled up told us of his fear." He dropped the sack of rice and fish to the ground. "Where do we go now, *danna-san?*"

"Wait here, while I go inside. Then we will know."

"I—will come in with you, *danna-san!*"

In the one room of the hut they found a short, fat Japanese, who drew in his breath politely to greet them.

"So you are here!" he announced, as if the idea surprized him.

"I am glad that you expected me," Westgaard said, bowing. "The fool who brought me has already left."

"Your coming was told me by a message brought earlier," the fat Japanese admitted. "And now I will attempt to convince you that the coming is useless; worse, that it is dangerous."

"That has all been explained," Westgaard told him. "And I am here, anyway."

The other examined him sadly.

"Well," he said, "I know a man of courage when I see one. I will not argue with you. If you are not too tired from walking

when it was impossible for your pushers to make the car go, I say we will get this business over with. I am told to be your guide to the nearest station on the *aiyu-sen* myself. It is a strange order, for I am not a government man, but work for Nippon Camphor—but it is an order just the same. If we do not obey them, the government is likely to lower the price we get for our product when we sell it to them. *Hai!* do you white men do business in such a way? If you are ready—"

"I'm ready," Westgaard said. "How about food?"

"You will be fed at the guard-stations."

"And if I leave the guard-stations?"

"You will not need food! Your mouth will be stuffed, yes, but with clay, and since your head will be in a Tai-yal's hut, while your body will become—*hmm!* who knows what?—nourishment will not be needed! Come, white man!"

At the edge of the huddled collection of huts lay the visible evidence of what Westgaard was after—two-bushel bags of camphor-chips, carried there on coolies' backs to await wheeled transportation. Just out of sight of the village they came upon mounds of earth and mud bricks resembling Chinese brick-kilns, with bamboo pipes for carrying the water of mountain streams through them, and others for drawing off the crudely refined product. The colorless camphor-oil dripped into tins some of which still bore the original American trademarks of kerosene and gasoline. About the mounds were spilled camphor-chips, and their pungent, not unpleasant smell struck deep into everything, fairly permeating the very air.

Westgaard remarked at the curved shape of the chips, and the fat Japanese stopped puffing long enough to say that they were scooped from the chopped-up trees with a hollowed ax. He plodded through the clearing, and, as the path struck into the jungle, remarked casually that it was hard for men to die that women might be perfumed; after that he saved his breath.

The path wound steadily higher. Giant ferns, twenty feet high, hid the trunks of enormous *lunoki**. No sun sifted through the green ceiling above the three men. The air was misty, dank, and yet laden with no spicy odor; blank, rather. At sudden twists, they came upon low shacks made of rude slabs of wood or slate, some—the food-houses—on stilts, the bottoms set in puddles of water, against the raids of white ants.

The few men or women that Westgaard saw hanging about the huts had their faces tattooed in blue, two broad bands in long diagonal lines, like symmetrical scratches, from the corners of the mouth and nose to where they disappeared in the hair near the ears. In addition, the men had a narrow strip of horizontal blue lines from the hair to the bridge of the nose. The men were filleted about the forehead; one of them had a feather thrust through this band.

The new guide whispered that the feather symbolized a head the wearer had taken.

Westgaard saw no reason not to seek information.

"I though possibly it was a sign of—the crows," he said.

"You know something," the Japanese muttered soberly. "It is just as well. I thought there was a connection between feather and—crow. But he wears a hawk-feather, my friend. And when the—crow—has preyed, he is likely to leave a crow-feather at the place! Nor have we ever found a headless body. It is not the same. A man disappears. Nothing shows that he is gone, save the feather of a crow! When I think that the crows have been considered sacred objects—*mah!* It is enough to make a man become a follower of foreign gods—the *Christyoko*, even! I tell you that I am not afraid, but that is because I am a fool. You are not afraid, and for the same reason. The wise man stays with geisha at an inn, whereas the fools—" he lapsed into silence. "Some day," he added, "you will see where Amada—myself—*yoji ga ate no tagio*—has gone on a business journey, and it will mean that he will not come back! Make of that what you will!"

"A friend of mine—a man of whom I knew, rather—went on a business journey, Amada-san; he came here, or near here. He came back. But on his body were great claw-marks, and in his head remained no sense. A white man."

Amada nodded.

"True. He came here. A young and happy fellow. On a fool's errand—as you are. I took him as I take you. For the same purpose. Only he did not come back, and I hope you will." The full meaning of what Westgaard had said struck the Japanese finally. "He came back? Clawed? It

*Sun trees.

is impossible! How? Where? None saw him here, although we searched!" Amada's voice was shrill and high. "What did he say? What did he—gods of heaven and earth—" Amada squealed, and, before Westgaard could do more than whirl, was whipped out of sight into the tangle of fern and undergrowth.

WESTGAARD, with Mumaka as close as the boy found possible, crashed into the dense thicket, which closed over his head immediately. His gun was in his hand as he roared, "Amada! *Do shita!* Where are you?" and had for answering a distant rustling of fern fronds. He thrashed his way through, toward the place he imagined the sound had come from, and came to a small beaten-down clearing not six feet square. Mumaka grasped him by the arm, and whispered—

"Look up!"

The white man looked.

The first branches of the giant tree were green only at the ends, and the smooth bare bole could be seen extending upward to where the green of high branches pressed all about. But there, high, the huge pinnate leaves moved restlessly, and from no wind.

Westgaard raised his automatic swiftly. He might hit Amada—if Amada were there, but what of that? He might have the bullets find another mark; either way, it was the thing to do.

The jungle seemed to obliterate the sound the gun made as effectively as a silencer. Westgaard fired the five shots in the clip, covering an area in the tree-top with it. He reloaded the clip rapidly, and as he slid it into place he jumped involuntarily.

"Caw—Caw—"

Mockingly, sardonically.

Westgaard needed all of his self-control to avoid firing the second clip as fast as he could pull trigger.

He looked up at the great tree. Climbing it was out of the question. He could not, and he doubted if even the huge-toed natives could. Even so, there had not been time for any one to climb it, let alone some one carrying Amada's weight. He might exhaust every shell, and do no more than clip leaves from the branches. He must shoot at something he could not see, something that might be anywhere in a radius of forty feet.

There was, he realized unpleasantly, nothing for him to do that would help Amada, even if the rotund Japanese could still be helped.

To wait at the foot of the tree meant first finding it, no simple task; it also meant that while he blundered through the thicket searching for the proper trunk—and how should he recognize it—he was out of sight from anything which might happen. To run back to the village was useless, more useless than continuing up the narrow path to the guard-line, the *aiyu-sen.* If Amada's tragedy had not already been acted out, Westgaard could not stop it; if it had, and from the silence Westgaard believed it must, he did no one good by remaining.

Nevertheless, with goggled-eyed Mumaka at his elbow, he halted on his way back to the path, turned, and passionately sprayed six more shots into the tree-top. Nothing—no sound, no raucous cawing, greeted his bullets. No moving of the leaves, save the gentle downward volplaning of a severed one.

Even after Westgaard was on the path again he kept his gun in hand. What Mumaka thought of the business was evidenced by his having dropped the food-sack, and not realizing that it was missing until they were almost at the guard-station.

VII

THE path had crept steadily toward the ridge; so dense was the undergrowth that Westgaard could see no light until he was actually in a clearing that straddled the top of the range. A clearing over fifty feet wide, that followed the ridge north and south as far as Westgaard could see. Directly in front of him, in the middle of the open space, was a wire fence, octagonally shaped, and eight feet high. Inside of it an immaculate Japanese soldier paced his round, his back to the approaching pair. Westgaard saw a gate at the path's end, hung between the metal posts which made the fence's uprights, and reached a hand out to swing it open.

The Japanese guard turned jerkily, brought his gun from his shoulder to port, and then stared earnestly at the new-comers. Since he made no effort to challenge, Westgaard's hand continued toward the wires of the gate, when he heard some one from behind the barrier call loudly:

"*Seiyo-jin! Abunaiyoja!* It is dangerous, foreigner!"

Westgaard stopped, and saw another uniformed man running toward him, stop on his way, stoop, lift up the cover of a metal box on the ground, do something inside of it, and then continue more slowly to the gate.

"It would have been an unpleasant welcome!" the officer smiled. "The fence was alive, *danna-san!*" He held out his hand, pushing the gate open with the other. "We expected you. I suppose my friend Amada is coming; he is too fat. I often tell him so. The fence is electrified. How are you?"

Westgaard shook the proffered hand.

"Amada-san is not coming," he said gravely.

"He permitted you to make the journey alone? That was not according to orders." He scanned Westgaard's face swiftly. "I can see that you are angered by that lack of attention. And yet you do not seem to be the sort of man that—*mah!*" his glib words froze. Very slowly, he said, as much to himself as to Westgaard, "Amada was my friend. The games of chess we have played together, in the rainy weather—Amada gone! Is it not so?"

Westgaard said:

"Gone, yes. He was walking with me, and then he simply disappeared. Unless I'm crazy, he was taken to the top of a tree. It is a crazy yarn. I heard a bird, I tell you! A crow. I shot at the noise in the tree, but—"

"Nothing happened! Nothing ever happens, but men are killed and vanish just the same! But my poor friend Amada— Come to the fort, if you please. I am only the doctor of this district. The captain will wish to hear what you have to tell."

"What will he do?"

"What can he do? Of what use to do anything? This is becoming more than a matter of coolies' opium-dreams! It has us all afraid. Even you are none too happy. The nostrils of your nose quivered when you told me."

There were lateral rows of barbed wire, with cleverly concealed openings in the short distance between barrier and fort—a thick wooden affair, loopholed on each side, and with a larger opening facing the far jungle that told Westgaard the garrison must have a mountain gun about—an old Hotchkiss that did little more than jam, he discovered later. It all told Westgaard plainly that the *aiyne** of this last line had savages to deal with who were not satisfied to sulk when their land was exploited.

Before the doctor allowed the officer in the fort to greet Westgaard he snarled—

"Another! Amada, this time!"

In the interval before the captain answered, Westgaard saw that he was in a place some eighteen feet square, with carbines handily stacked in each corner, and bedding tied in bundles against the walls.

"We all sleep here—seven of us," the captain said finally. "If you were only drunk, Westgaard-san—your name was in the letter—I would say that your story of Amada, whatever it is, was imagined. But you are very sober. And so I ask, Tell me the story."

Westgaard told him briefly.

Neither spoke when the white man had finished, and he added—

"There was nothing else I could do!"

"There was—and is—nothing that anybody can do," the captain said sadly. Then his voice changed abruptly. "Some day—we will see!"

Dr. Noriko said shrilly—

"I am not fooled by this bird-talk!"

Westgaard saw no reason for concealment.

"Nor I," he said. And told them of what had happened in Taihoku—of Harrison, of the shop-keeper and the image of the sun-crow, of the happening at the inn. "No bird did that," he concluded.

"No bird did any of it," Noriko snapped.

"I saw the top of the tree shake," Westgaard said gently.

"Amada was carried up."

"No. He couldn't have been! I didn't lose over twenty seconds—and in that time whatever happened took place. No man or animal in the world could have carried Amada to the top of the tree in that time."

"It was no bird, I tell you!"

Westgaard said dispassionately—

"It cawed, doctor."

The little doctor could stand no more.

"And while we talk of birds and animals and devils," he screamed, "my friend Amada is being killed, or tortured, or torn to pieces. What are we—men? Let us do something. Captain Kokino, summon the men here. What do we wait for?

"I will send two men and a sergeant,"

*guard

Kokino agreed. "They will find nothing, Noriko, except perhaps another of these—" he unbuttoned his uniform and took out a number of black crow-feathers—"to add to my collection. Each one, Westgaard-san, means a missing man." Then, very thoughtfully, "It is the one mistake, Westgaard-san!"

Westgaard fumbled in a pocket full of socks, and drew out a package of cigarets, which he handed around, and then lighted his own.

"A mistake," he said. "Especially if you only find one feather each time."

"We are agreed," Noriko grunted.

CAPTAIN KOKINO went to the door, raised his voice and directed the sergeant who had been half asleep against the fort's outer wall to take two men and to go back along the path until he found, on the right side, some broken fern fronds, and then to see what he might see.

"You will know the place," he said, "for you will find a crow-feather on the path. I know you have had no sleep, sergeant, but you must go notwithstanding. I myself will act as guard tonight in your place."

The sergeant saluted crisply, batted his eyes, but not from the sun, came into the crude fort and selected his carbine, threw the bolt an inch back and, satisfied that the shell was in position, saluted a second time and stepped from the room.

"Sit down, Westgaard-san," Kokino requested. "Since you speak Japanese as well as we do, you will not mind the floor. *Hai!* That boy of yours—" looking at Mumaka—"has eyes that could be readily knocked off with a stick. Sit, boy! This is not a palace!"

Kokino grinned as Mumaka sat as close to Westgaard as he could.

Even the doctor said cheerfully:

"No birds will come into this place, boy. You need not be afraid here."

For once Mumaka's ready tongue refused to work.

"It is an uncanny business," Kokino declared. "But not the most important to you. Aren't you the Westgaard who found that nitrocellulose could be—but of course you are, or my government would never have given you the opportunity to get camphor of your own. *That* is what interests you. Camphor. I do not think they did you a favor in sending you here, Westgaard-san! You are worth more than a crow feather, eh? Tell me, what do you propose to do?"

"I had only one thought," the white man said. "I don't see how it will work, now. If I could demonstrate that the allotted district from which I may chop camphor-trees is safe, I'd be allowed to bring in men, despite the monopoly. That is, take the stuff just like the private companies, but instead of turning it over to the government, use it myself. There're details, of course; the government is entitled to some sort of percentage for what I'd take."

"And the district is—where?"

Westgaard disgorged two boxes of shells, an extra clip, and three handkerchiefs from his inside coat pocket, and then produced a letter.

"It tells in here," he said, and handed Kokino the letter.

Kokino read it through.

"A miserable trick!" he snapped. "The work of some under-clerk who has been reading yellow newspapers. I feel positive that whoever gave you the real permission did not know what district it was. No? *Hai!* You will go back, Westgaard-san, and tell them! If *we* have unsafe districts inside the guard-line, can you be expected to make safe the land beyond it? *Mah!*"

"I understood it was beyond the area of protection," Westgaard said. "But even you must do that—you can't have a permanent line, can you?"

"We push the line ahead, yes. But look how we do it! It is guarded by men. Mountain power gives us electrification along much of it, and we have given some of the savages a good dance! But they have been able to dig under it, or erect little bamboo stiles over it at night. Now, they cut the wires instead—and none are electrocuted. Is that the work of savages?"

"Crow's work," Dr. Noriko muttered.

"Our *aiyu-sen* has always been crossed by Taiyals who were in need of heads," Kokino went on. "A marriage. A death. A birth. An ailing bullock. Each meant a crossing of the guard-line, and the killing of some tame native. We have tried everything to stop it. At first, years ago, we would summon the chiefs, and give them much *sake*—as you did with your Indians—and they would give us permission to go ahead, receiving drink or guns as payment.

Then they would attack the camphor-camps, and destroy everything—huts, stills and men—and leave these last headless. It is not so now. We push the guard-line ahead, and give the workers what protection we can."

"A poor protection," Noriko said, when the other was silent. "In six months we have lost more natives' heads, and more of our own, than all of the marriages that have taken place in six years have amounted to!"

"It is so," the captain agreed somberly. "Each day the men are more afraid to go out along the guard-line. Camphor production is less than half of what it should be. I wish some of the men who sat behind their desks were here; they would not be so ready with advice. 'If there exists a gigantic, man-killing bird, find it and shoot it, and then send it carefully crated to our museum!' they write me. '*If* there exists a bird!' *Mah!* Are we all children? I say there is no bird—and then Amada is missing, taken before your eyes, which are those of an intelligent man! We are all men of sense. What do you make of it, Westgaard-san?"

"Until Amada disappeared, I had my mind made up that—"

Noriko could not keep still for long.

"We all did," he said. "It is an attempt to intimidate us. That much is clear. How else the leaving of the crow feather? How else what happened to you in Taihoku? A band, worshipping a giant crow!"

"You admit the bird, then," Kokino suggested.

"I admit nothing! It is a conclusion I am forced to."

Westgaard shifted his squatting position, and found both men watching him eagerly.

"From the cutting of live wires, it is pretty positive that there is some native—"

"Or some one among them!"

"Same thing. Some one who knows plenty. A renegade Japanese? Have you ever lost one, who might have gone native?"

"Never."

"If Harrison—the white man who is dead—were not dead, that might solve—"

Kokino's carefully builded restraint snapped.

"We talk and talk," he shouted. "Noriko and I have talked for weeks! If those who write us to solve the mystery would say, 'Kokino, we send you five hundred men,' I would have the matter over within a month. I would—"

"'Civilize 'em with a Krag,'" Westgaard hummed.

"Exactly! I do not say it is right. I do not say it is wrong. If a thing is ordered done, why not do it at once, instead of waiting years to do it? *Hai!* Is it written that men who collect heads instead of postage stamps are fit to inhabit the earth? Some old women in Tokyo are bleating that the gods gave these Taiyals this land. What of that? Did not the same gods make tigers? Are we, then, to be eaten by them? *Mah!*"

He looked at Westgaard shamefacedly.

"When men are alone, they think too much," he concluded. "We are all agreed on so much: There *may* be a huge bird of prey about, there assuredly *is* a band of natives doing us no good, and for only one purpose—to frighten us and drive us away. I am ordered not to go beyond the guard-line. You are given permission to do that very thing. It appears to me, Westgaard-san, that your life is not considered very valuable! Well?"

Westgaard said—

"If you were to go after these savages, where would be the first place you would go?"

"To their main village," Kokino said swiftly. "Why? We have examined the different paths to the guard-line, and they all point in that direction. And when the line is crossed at night, it is somewhere near these paths."

"Seems as if it would be fairly easy to stop a crossing," the white man suggested. "If you know where they come."

"*Hai!* I thought the same. But listen, Westgaard-san! A soft night, black as a panther's eyes when he kills. A small wind that rustles the ferns. An hour on guard—and nothing occurs. Another. The soldier obeys his orders; he goes back and forth behind the wire, always watching. His gun is not on his shoulder, no; he carries it ready. There is a new sound in the jungle. A whisper, perhaps. He sees nothing, and can not shoot—he looks closely. And then, in another direction, there is a little humming sound—and in the morning the relieving guard finds him stuck with an arrow—an arrow feathered with crow feather—and very dead."

"The crow feather means little to Kokino, or to me," Noriko put in. "But to the men, it is a message of the gods, since

the *yatagarasu* is the known messenger of the sun-goddess. *Mah!* But the thing is well planned!"

"They grow fearful," Kokino said.

FOR the first time Mumaka opened his mouth.

"What kind of birds are found in these foreign mountains?" he asked, drawing in his breath politely, and bowing from the hips.

"Many kinds," Kokino informed him, as one telling an ignorant child. "Of all colors. Red and blue, green and scarlet, yellow and black. Birds with tails as long as a small willow-branch. Birds with feathered crowns of purple and silver. More birds, O boy, than you have ever dreamed of, or even imagined when drunk."

"Large ones?"

"Well—no. Not so very large." Truthfully, "Even one variety that the Tai-yals consider sacred is quite small. None are very big. Why?" He looked at Mumaka kindly. "Do you believe there is a bird in this business, boy?"

"I think there is a bird in it," Mumaka said.

Kokino and Noriko both laughed, but Westgaard's face remained placid.

"If you were to get this bird, you would have no more trouble," Mumaka insisted heatedly.

"What bird?" Kokino asked slyly.

"That I do not know," Mumaka said, and though the two officers laughed immoderately, Mumaka did not seem at all crestfallen.

Westgaard stood up quietly.

"I'll unburden myself of a few things," he said thoughtfully, and emptied his pockets of everything save the extra clip and shells. "You see, gentlemen, I have come a long way for this. It means much. In a way, it might be the vindication of some friends of mine who have not been well treated. It has been a long way to come—"

"To turn back is always hard for the pride," Kokino said honestly. "But—what have we now?"

They had plenty.

A soldier carried into the building a fellow-guard, very dead, and feathered in the body with a dozen arrows, all black-tipped with crow-feathers.

"Where?" Kokino snarled.

The soldier told him as he laid his burden on the floor.

"You see?" Kokino said to Westgaard. "Not an eighth of a mile away—*ken*—and we heard never a sound. Is it any wonder that the men—"

"Show me where it happened," Westgaard requested tonelessly.

The four men left the loop-holed building traversed the barb-wired path and went through the electrified gate; with Kokino in the lead they walked abreast along the broad open space of the guard-line. None spoke, but the boy Mumaka, clairvoyant in some intangible way, stroked the arm of Westgaard's jacket and made little clucking noises in his throat. At a slight bend in the guard-line, marked by a fence-post—iron—higher than the rest, Kokino stopped.

"Here," he said. "You see the dim path into the jungle? The soldier was killed here. Tomorrow, the next day, the next week, perhaps—a man will be filled with arrows twenty miles away along the guard-line. Like lightning; now here, now there—"

"I figured it so," Westgaard said quietly. "Give me your carbine a moment, Kokino-san. Thank you. Take care of Mumaka until I come back. If I don't, I've left a roll of money in one of my socks Good-by."

Before they could reach a hand to stop him or remonstrate, Westgaard, butt of the gun in hand, had taken several short fast steps, lowered the barrel of the gun, utilized it as a pole, and vaulted over the fence. He did not look back; above Mumaka's wailing he heard Kokino say sadly:

"O shidzuka ni irasshaimase! Go in peace!"

VIII

IT WAS no path at all, save that the creepers had been cut away, and yet so dense was the undergrowth all about, so interwoven with long-fingered vines, that Westgaard had no difficulty in staying on it. The difficulty would have been to get off; should he meet Tai-yals it would be done face to face unless their semi-naked bodies might in some unimaginable way slip into the thicket. Westgaard, fully prepared, knew that the natives would be the most surprized, and that in the fraction of a second while they faltered he might clear the way efficiently—if it were necessary.

He was by no means certain that drastic methods would be the only one he might employ. He did not count on his white

face to save him—that had not saved poor Harrison; he did believe that his very bold venturing into their dangerous territory would give him a standing, and especially so since the Japanese never stepped beyond the protecting guard-line. On Mumaka's statement that a bird played some important part in the horrible events he placed reliance; it agreed with his own idea. Exactly how he did not know. He pieced together what he did know, and got little comfort from it.

He told himself that he was on a fool's errand, but one justifiable just the same. No more idiotic than any adventuring explorer's, but, he was afraid, likely to produce no greater results. He would see the country, but could he do more?

The obscure path met and crossed a second. The new path seemed, as near as the white man could guess, to parallel the guard-line; no good would come to him by taking it, and he kept to that which cut into the Taiyal territory, and which now began to grow steeper as it left the summit. So suddenly that Westgaard was more startled than if a savage had confronted him, the jungle stopped, and squarely at Westgaard's feet he saw a ravine a half-thousand feet deep, a gash in the green hills so iron-gray, so steep of side, that it appeared as a knife-wound in the earth. Across it swung in jerky rhythm a suspension bridge of rattan and bamboo that Westgaard guessed was almost as long as the chasm was deep.

There was no other way to cross than by this bridge. It was floored with great round lengths of bamboo—good enough footing for prehensile-toed savages, but precarious for a white man; there was a light hand-rail on one side, but the other dropped sheerly into the rocky cañon. As the white man watched the erratic swaying his heart began to pound; it would be nothing less than a feat to cross it, and he realized that once on it he would be in plain sight of any native about the ravine, the other side of which was not thickly jungled.

He could be potted like a wild bird—but not until he had neared the far side.

The only choice he had was to retrace his steps to the junction of the paths, and then continue until he found another trail; he had time enough for this, for he worked on no schedule, but, as he considered it, lost every inclination. What he did must be done boldly. If out of nothing save curiosity, the savages would, feeling certain of him, allow him to cross the bridge. What happened then was up to him. If boldness were needful, there was no better place to put it into execution than here and now.

The first ten feet of the bridge he managed casually enough. Then the crazy structure began to swing gently, and Westgaard, worried about his balance, did his best to remain rigid with it, instead of swaying to the movement of the bridge. His feet did not grip the smooth bamboo, and, lest he slide off, he placed each foot carefully in the inner groove made where the wood came together. He found that unconsciously he was leaning against the bamboo hand-rail—a thing that would never support him—and that he stopped pantingly at every wooden girder that held the bridge to the twisted rope-like suspending cables above.

It was growing steadily darker, the swift nightfall of the tropics; unheralded, a bitter cold rain torrented down and then shifted with a light wind so that it blew into Westgaard's eyes.

Only the possible thought that savage eyes were watching him kept the white man from straddling the bamboo and progressing in that manner. To turn back was impossible, or, he felt, actually more dangerous than to keep going ahead. He kept his face grimly ahead, but in his mind's eye he saw the bleak, craggy rocks below him. In the unprotected middle of the bridge the wind whipped at him, blowing up the chasm like smoke in a chimney; it completed what the rain had begun, and well-nigh blinded him.

Westgaard thought aloud, "What a fool I am!" and kept walking ahead just the same.

Rain made the bamboo under his feet increasingly slippery, and he pressed his feet into the groove with instinctive care.

After an age the wind seemed to howl less in his ears, the bridge to swing more slowly and regularly, and he knew that he was across. Another moment and he stumbled to the hard ground.

"They can't kill me worse than that," Westgaard thought, and lifted his head to take the first full breath since leaving the far side of the ravine.

As if governed by his jubilant gesture, an arrow slid noiselessly into the earth at his feet. Westgaard looked at it coolly enough,

although his heart seemed to rise and choke him, and then—why, he did not know, unless he was still pleasantly excited from the overcome danger—stooped, pulled the arrow from the ground, stripped the crow-feather from the shaft, stuck it in his cap and, head high, lifted his voice in mockery of the sound he had heard when the fat Japanese, Amada, had been captured—

Caw-caw-caw-rrrr!

If he had expected anything to result from this defiance, he was disappointed. No pattering of running feet, either toward him or away, no appearance of wild men, nor, what pleased him more, no volley of deadly arrows.

"Surprized 'em," Westgaard decided happily. "Last thing they expected. Now I've got to go ahead—as if I liked the business!"

He suited action to the words and, looking neither to right nor left, although his flesh prickled, followed the broadening path with a courage he did not entirely feel. He was careful to make no warlike gesture. He kept his hand resolutely away from the gun in his coat pocket, a thing done none too easily. The touch of the metal, even, would have been comforting.

That he was being watched, followed, he felt rather than saw or heard. This pursuit would become more and more difficult as the jungle thinned; on bare ground they would be completely out of bowshot; he saw, however, that after another quarter-mile trees began to grow thickly, and would hem him in where he could be safely spied upon by savages almost near enough to touch him.

Rain beat steadily, splashing up from the hard earth like fine spray. As he walked ahead, the trees, instead of approaching, seemed to grow more dim and distant; he looked for the first time to one side, and realized that no object nearer than several hundred feet could be seen at all, and that with the nearing night a dense tropical mist was settling down. Westgaard fixed his eyes to the point where the path came to the trees, and walked more rapidly. Had he desired, he might slip from his pursuers, but would gain no advantage thereby, but only be forced to wait until the mist cleared—morning, perhaps—and then seek a guarded path.

Every advantage was with his watchers. He sought one path, to which their own footsteps would surely bring them, and yet Westgaard thought that all of this might be turned to his own good. He quickened his steps and soon reached the trees. That he was watched was positive now; he heard little liquid sounds all about him in the gloom, noiseless words like the mumblings of cat-animals.

A sudden notion struck him. On the rain-drenched floor of the forest—giant camphor-trees, with only scanty underbrush—his shoes made no sound at all. How close were his pursuers? Were they in actual touch with him? He swung himself into the lowest branches of a squat, thick evergreen, and pulled himself upward.

That he had beaten the Taiyals was almost immediately proven.

FIRST one, then a second, gathered at the dim mouth of the path; men armed with spear, bow, and long curved machete-like knives, all tattooed in blue, all naked save for one scant upper garment. There was a momentary conference, and then, as five more joined these, they lined the way, carefully concealed, and, fifty feet back on the path, awaited Westgaard's advent. That none made preparation other than concealment showed they intended nothing more than following him. Westgaard wished, now, that he had continued on his business.

Only the pelting rain kept the Taiyals from hearing his drop to the earth from the tree; Westgaard gave no backward glance, but walked swiftly and noiselessly on the wet leaves away from them. After fifty paces he broke into a loping run, which the short-legged Malayan Taiyals would find none too easy to match; find, because of his start, impossible to overtake when they at last discovered that the white man was either lost in the midst of the forest or had reached its entry before them.

Westgaard was almost ashamed of the new joy which ate into him. He realized that he should have been thinking of a way out of the idiotic position he had willingly placed himself in; that camphor was the thing—that, and the ultimate confounding of Heald. And yet he was lost in the satisfaction of outwitting these natives in their own land. He'd been getting too fat up Okonai way, too fat and lazy and contented. That was over. He'd never be satisfied with mere comfort again.

As he ran, breathing deeply but not

heavily, the use his body gave him thrilled him; a piece of mechanism long disused but now answering the call of his head with never a falter. It was a trifle too fat—his head was a bit fat, also—but he would remedy all that.

He was so engrossed that he almost burst into a Taiyal village before he realized that the camphor-laurels had become palms. Swiftly, he stepped off the path, and looked about him in the gloom for a hiding-place. As he cast about, he rejected what had been his original intention—to walk suddenly into the first village that he came to, as if unafraid. Unafraid he was, but might it not be well to understand what he was getting into? That the savages had lost him would seem, to them, close to supernatural. Could he not make it appear even more so?

A deep depression at the roots of a tree gave him exactly the concealment he wanted and one from which he could rise immediately and with no loss of prestige, since it would seem that he had been standing all the time.

The village had twenty houses, low, built of slabs of slate laid flat, and with carved wooden beams under the eaves. On wide, slate-floored verandas tiny fires, blown up, began to blossom under shallow pots, and the *thump* of millet being ground came monotonously from every hut. A woman staggered noiselessly past Westgaard's hiding place, a child carried papoose-fashion on her back, her arms filled with wet sticks to cook the night meal.

She was pretty, and strikingly like a Japanese girl, although still inexplainably Malayan; her breath whistled through her nose as she hurried fearsomely toward one of the huts. The highest hut of the village was propped by sticks so that it stood six feet from the ground, and Westgaard guessed that it was the community assemblage place.

He dug needlessly deeper into his refuge as voices hummed up the path and he saw the wraithy figures of his former followers dash at full speed into the silent village.

One of these raised his voice, and men came rapidly from the huts, all excited, all jabbering at once in a language that conveyed nothing to the equally kindled white man. It was dark, dim with mist as well, and Westgaard peered as best he could, so hard that his eyes ached from effort.

The door of the unwindowed club-house swung open, and with it light made the chattering men half visible. For the first time Westgaard realized the wildness of what the gloom had concealed—the femininely-fierce, repelling faces of the men, the sheen of their oiled skins and play of long sleek muscles. He had no time to shudder at it. The brightness from the light was blocked out partially by a huge figure, at the sight of which the Taiyals fell silent.

Even Westgaard, hidden in the darkness, shivered as unconsciously as he breathed when this new figure stepped down from the hut and turned so the light was on his face.

As tall as Westgaard himself, the man was far broader, huge without being fat, cumbersome without losing agility, uncanny—and, Westgaard believed, utterly horrible. That Westgaard could see his eyes at all proved their curious brilliancy. His face was puffy of jowl, and yet when he spoke little bunches of muscle appeared at his jaws in place of wrinkles.

He was hard to place, in the none-too-good light. Chinese, Westgaard thought first, and yet there appeared more than a trace of Caucasian; an indefinable something about the man's bearing and carriage.

Whatever the giant said was galvanic. Taiyals began to circle like nosing curs, and Westgaard cowered into his retreat, convinced now that safety lay in remaining in concealment. He had no ignorant savage to deal with, but a canny Chinese or, what was worse, a mongrel.

For the first time since leaving the *aiyusen* he wriggled a hand into his pocket and brought out his gun, slipping the safety-catch; for the first time he wished fervently for the warm secure library of the Yokohama club. He knew himself bitterly for an ass and tried to think ahead for a way out of the mess.

Not his hiding-place, but the gloom and queer slanting shadows that the light from the main hut cast, prevented his discovery. For seconds at a time he held his breath as searching eyes seemed too look directly at him.

The giant's anger at the Taiyals' failure to find the stranger was audible. He roared and bellowed as the search was unavailing, and then turned and went back into his hut. A moment later Westgaard saw what set his teeth on edge anew. The assembled savages prostrated themselves, groveling servilely and whimpering little animal noises. Lay there, expectant, noses to the ground.

On their backs the yellow light from the hut flickered, touched here and there by the red of a cooking-fire.

And then Westgaard heard the wildest sound he had ever heard in his life. Not the noise a crow would make—that would have only set him to chuckling at the ruse. A sound he had never heard before. Shrill, eery, raucous; a fierce scream that rasped upward, held the high note weirdly, and then fell, like swooping wings, to nothing.

IX

TWO thoughts chased back and forth in Westgaard's head as he watched the village's business of eating soon completed and saw that the feeble lights no longer aggravated the darkness. First, that in the Chinese—he thought of him as that—he had to contend with a man immeasurably his superior in guile, as witness the fellow's position in the village; and second, that the very venturing from his place of concealment was dangerous—that the Chinese probably counted on that thing and was prepared to meet it. He saw nothing in proof of this. No guard. No slinking figure.

The Chinese was in the Taiyal village for no good. The Taiyals feared him, doubtless with excellent cause. And, more important, the Chinese's hut had inside of it what they feared doubly. The huge yellow man had never made that awful scream, a noise too inhuman for the worst brute.

What had Mumaka said? That there was a bird in the matter, somewhere. And Westgaard believed him right. He stuck grimly to his original belief that no bird in the world, actual or supernatural, could have flown to a tree-top with Amada's bulk. But had the scream come from a bird? It was possible. As the white man mulled the idea over, it seemed more than possible. Had he, purely by luck, stumbled on the village from which all of the Japanese guards' troubles came?

The very notion was bracing, and took from him much of cramp and cold. Was he, then, to wait until morning before action? What action? Return to the *aiyusen?* He'd never make it across the misty open place, with nothing to guide him. To wait where he was would become, in daylight, impossible. There was one risk, and that the greatest; the Chinese was depending on the reported stranger's false security—because of the sleeping village—and intended to lure him to capture.

He must do the thing that was expected, but he would be prepared for whatever might happen. Westgaard decided to wait another half-hour. At the end of five minutes he was itching to start, and before seven had passed he crawled silently from his sodden retreat and toward the village.

More sudden than the short dusk had been the actual nightfall. It was so dark that at ten feet a tree-stump took the shape of a man on guard, a discarded cooking-pot became a crouching warrior. The slate-slabbed huts gave out no glimmer of light, and Westgaard steered for the only feeble glow he could see—a thin streak that came from a wide crack in the floor of the stilted house which held the Chinese.

His gun was back in his pocket again; he felt that his eyes were as keen as any savage's, and that he might—with luck—throttle any posted guard. With luck; without that, he knew, he could do little.

The hard, bare earth made no sound as he crawled, careful to avoid dragging his shoes. On some distant peak Westgaard heard the roll of thunder, and his heart almost jerked to a stop as he considered that a flash of lightning would reveal him to any watcher. Thunder brayed again, but no blinding light preceded it.

At a dozen paces from the raised hut Westgaard changed his course slightly and made for a large upright supporting the shack; he might, if necessary, conform his figure to the wood and so fool any chance subsequent observer. He increased his caution, eyes to the ground to avoid any stick of wood or bit of metal that might make a noise which would sound large in the silent village. The black dim upright was before him now; without a second look at it he began carefully to rise from his knees, and then a tiny noise near-by indicated the closeness of death. What Westgaard did was utterly instinctive. He flung himself against the black upright, to take advantage of its protection, felt it give, lifted it fiercely and brought it to earth—all in the split-second during which thunder rumbled.

He wasted no instant in surprize, but swarmed madly over the prostrate figure, found the Taiyal's throat—taking a cut across the arm as he did—smashed down

over the writhing body with his own and began the grim work of pressing his fingers into flesh. The writhing stopped. Westgaard used the Taiyal's own knife to cut strips from the fellow's one blanketlike garment; gagged and bound him.

Only then did he wonder how much noise had been made. From the dead-asleep village, none at all.

What had saved him, Westgaard knew now, was this: The hut was on six-foot stilts, just high enough for him to stand upright, but too low for the Taiyal to swing aloft his long knife—made for cutting, not stabbing; the Taiyal had made a long side-swipe with it; had, because of Westgaard's movement toward the man's own legs, missed—which, had he struck downward, he would never have—and lost balance.

He heard a small new sound now. A rustling of feathers, and a hoarse noise, answered by a Chinese grunt.

Silence again.

Westgaard worked his way toward the crack of light, and, under it, came slowly erect, eye to the crevice.

At a table made of slabs of wood sat the huge Chinese and, at close range, he appeared to have a definite trace of Caucasian, readily discernible in his gray-blue eyes and full-lipped red mouth. The first look of the mouth prepared Westgaard for the Taiyal girl who lay on a heap of blankets in a corner. The white man shifted his position so as to take in the other side of the room. What he saw made his lips press together in a satisfied grin.

A cage, made of closely woven steel wires, and in it a magnificent bird. The greater part of the huge bird was a blackish brown, like rusty crow-feathers, but the head and neck were covered with feathers of a rich golden red, almost fire-colored. The feet were yellow as the sun. Westgaard guessed the height of the bird to be nearly three feet; that the spread of wings must be fully nine or ten. An uncompleted meal was on the floor of the cage; the bird had gorged full on smaller birds of bright plumage.

Westgaard had seen gigantic birds in captivity before, but never a specimen as large as this, nor as beautifully fierce in appearance. He knew little of bird species, but guessed rightly that it was an eagle of some sort. How it had been given the name of sun-crow was apparent at first glance; what it meant to superstitious savages he could well enough imagine. Probably none of the Taiyals had ever seen a bird more than six inches in body, and here was a veritable monster among birds.

Even as Westgaard marveled at the tremendous size, he realized that not even this bird could fly off with a man of Amada's weight—or at least neither swiftly nor silently—and that was how Amada disappeared.

The Chinese was busy at his crude hide-covered table, and his writing-brush moved ceaselessly. He seemed vastly satisfied with whatever he was doing, for he grimaced and chuckled—further proof that he had white blood in his veins.

Westgaard grew cold and stiff with watching, but finally the Chinese, without blowing out the light, pulled the blankets away from the Taiyal girl, arranged them under the table to suit himself and crawled into the warmed, improvised bed. His conscience must have been good. In moments he snored loudly. The girl shivered, moaned half in sleep and finally curled herself into a ball. The eagle kept one bright eye fixed on the single light of the room. The half-breed gave over snoring and began to sleep heavily, noiselessly, and with closed mouth and relaxed features.

As Westgaard watched the evil face shadowed by the table, the night became so still that the ticking of his watch articulated into sharp beats like minute hammers. He could not stay where he was. How soon might not the Taiyal guard be relieved by another savage?

Westgaard had no proof beyond the great bird that the half-breed Chinese was behind the plotting and deaths. He felt he needed no more.

What was he to do next? Kill the Chinese? Easy enough—but was it all that was necessary? Kill the bird? As easy, but never done without noise. If he could gag and bind the breed as he had done the Taiyal, and get him back to the *aiyu-sen*, much might be done with him. That notion was impossible. He could not crack the fellow between the eyes with his gun-butt; there was not enough room under the table to do that. He might throttle him, but—again the table!—the breed was certain to writhe and squirm and kick against the underside of the table-top, wake the Taiyal girl, and so set the fat to bubbling.

If only he could coax the yellow-faced man out of the hut—

There was no way Westgaard could think of that did not include the Taiyals. No way at all. None. But— Why, —— it, there was! More, it was feasible—far more so than starting anything in a village of savages controlled by a bestial half-breed, who had already worked on the Taiyal's superstition.

He stripped off his coat as he came out from under the floor of the hut and transferred the gun to his left hand, in which he held the coat as well. The open space on which the huts fronted was not so dark, and Westgaard saw that the mist was breaking into low, scudding clouds which separated to let almost imperceptible moonlight through.

"Good thing I'm not superstitious," he thought, "or I'd think the gods were helping me—or hindering, depending on what happens now."

He mounted the ladder-stairs swiftly, tried the crude door and found that it swung inward, moved it enough to slide through. The great slabs of the floor made no sound under his pressure. Coat in hand, he approached the cage of the bird quickly, his heart keeping time to his steps. The eagle drew back from him, more in fear than in anger, and Westgaard knew how the screams of the bird could be produced at opportune times, although he did not know what instrument of torture the half-breed used.

The bird moved its feathers uncannily, its beak opened, and at that moment Westgaard lowered his coat over the cage. It covered the top of the cage and shut the bird's vision from everything above it, but Westgaard was not satisfied with that. He wanted the cage completely covered, the bird kept perfectly silent.

THE blankets on the floor were not to be touched; even one seemingly not touching the sleeping half-breed might, if moved, awaken him. Westgaard looked around swiftly, seeing as he did so two long shelves in a corner, on which grimacing skulls, stripped of flesh and white as if boiled, goggled at him with empty eye-sockets; there was nothing of covering save the hide extending over a half of the table, and stained with gobs of grease and slashed as if by a knife in several places. On it were a number of papers stacked in orderly piles. Westgaard lifted them slowly lest they crackle, replaced them on the wood table-top, achieved the hide and placed it over the cage, slipping the handle through one of the cuts.

The weight of the cage startled him and gave indication of the huge power the eagle must have. Westgaard carried it with taut muscles and reached the door safely. The Chinese would want that eagle; it must mean his power and control, for what purpose Westgaard did not try to guess. He went cautiously down the steps, to find that the light grew increasingly brighter, the air more crisp and cold, untropic-like.

He carried the cage more easily now, guessing its weight to be something under fifty pounds, crossed the open space and came to the first of the palms; then he stopped and lowered the cage to the ground. He lifted an edge of the blanket and found the eagle eyeing him intently, but apparently satisfied and willing to remain silent.

With the new light in his favor Westgaard could take the first wood-path through the camphor trees, come to the open space at the ravine, and get across the bridge. If it had been difficult alone, how would it be carrying a fifty-pound weight? He did not like to think of that.

And yet the white man did not start for safety. He returned across the Taiyal's village, climbed the ladder to the Chinese half-breed's hut again and peered in. He had been a fool not to have done both things at once, but now, with not a look about him, he tiptoed to the table, picked up the sheaf of papers, making doubly certain that the breed would come after him, and turned for the door. He was at last very pleased with himself, and grinned happily at a rat which ran from under the skull-shelf and out of the door ahead of him.

He saw the gray flying figure cut across the hard earth before the village and wished that he himself might move as fast, although he saw no reason why terrible haste was necessary—

And then he saw wildly that it was.

He had encompassed each difficulty, had been aided by luck, luck of heavy sleepers, probably, like most Formosans, opium-smokers, of darkness and then of light—and a rodent who had been nibbling at the skull-jaw had changed the entire aspect of

things. For the rat had run close enough to the eagle's cage for the great bird to see it, and the bird had screamed, not once, but three times.

Westgaard thought this, but ran as he did so.

He grabbed the handle of the cage while still in his stride, did not turn as he heard shouts—all dominated by one bull-like roar from the half-breed—but, head down, ran at top speed.

It would take moments—minutes, he hoped—for pursuit to be organized; he already had put several hundred yards between himself and the village. Unencumbered, he was a match in speed for the mountain-men on a path. Laden as he was—how soon before they were within shooting-distance? And what would happen at the swinging bridge? Even if he should get safely across the barren space this side of the ravine? Yet he did not drop the heavy cage, but tried to run the faster. As he ran he stuck the sheaf of papers into his pants pocket, then shifted cage and gun from hand to hand.

Wild cries prevented him from slowing until he got his second wind. He knew that he must maintain his pace and, as his breath began to gulp from him, he did not see how he could. But he ran.

The bird was battered about the cage and betrayed his presence, even if the Taiyals had not known which way he had gone, with frightened and harsh screams. The coat dropped, but the hide, caught in the handle, held fast.

The sound of fierce voices grew no nearer, nor did they lose volume; Westgaard reached the barren ground approaching the ravine and bridge with his original handicap. It was flooded with light now; hard, white moonlight that made Westgaard's hurrying shadow clear and black; the bird was fully aroused and screamed piercingly again and again. Westgaard did not see things plainly, despite the glaring light; everything seemed to have a red haze—even the sharp rocks he could see on the far steep side of the ravine.

His heart began to pound more heavily than from exertion at the thought of the bridge. That the chasm could not be scaled he knew. To wait, hidden, was to be found out, for the clamor increased as the first of the Taiyals rushed out of the forest-path and caught sight of him.

He ripped off his belt, slipped it through the handle, buckled it and slung the belted cage to his back, thankful for the hide and the close mesh. His body took the task over, and he found himself astraddle of the bridge, and worming his way along with surprizing speed. Knees and hand contrived to help him, and, in his exhaustion, the swaying of the bridge lost its terror. He made a hundred feet before the first Taiyal reached the bridge, and before the first arrow—missing aim because of the very swaying—sang past him. Then, cold at last, he gripped his knees against the round bamboo, turned, raised his gun and fired.

WITH the discharge of the gun he went back to his task again, but knew from the new uneven motion of the bridge that many feet were on it.

His second shot, the result of which he did not see, was not wasted. He heard a long *a-a-a-a-a-ah* and then a dull crash far below, the lesser sound of bounding which displaced small rocks—and then the swinging of the bridge again. Arrows, although few in number, whirred past him, one hitting metallically against a wire of the cage, at which the Chinese screamed warningly; the Taiyals had crowded one behind the other on to the bridge. They themselves swung with the crazy structure, they were able to hold to it with their big-toed feet, needing both hands to draw bow, but their aim was never good.

Westgaard shot once more to keep them from rushing him and getting at knife-length, hopeful now of reaching the nearing earth.

He heard a wild bellowing of orders, and knew that the half-breed, enormously broad and agile when moving, still was proved no runner. He thought what he would do if he were the half-breed and was immediately aware that the half-breed had decided upon that very thing. The last of the Taiyals to reach the bridge were ordered back, and arrows began to come close. The cage had slipped to the left; all of the arrows came at his right side.

Even with one in him, Westgaard believed that he could go on; the distance was too great for the arrow-head to have much penetrating force. One hit him in the right shoulder, and sharp pain ran down his

side as he hurried in his peculiar crablike fashion for the chasm's side, now not thirty feet away, but it did not stop him, although he could feel blood begin to trickle nauseatingly along his skin.

What the half-breed did next was the obvious and showed the undeniable power he had over the Taiyals. Westgaard's last backward glance showed that not all of the natives had returned to the far ground; and yet one of the others, urged by the half-breed, hacked at the rattan-and-bamboo suspension ropes with his knife.

There was an instant of wild jerking as the first cable tore through, and then, an instant later, Westgaard wound his arms and legs about the bamboo, both at points of the great extending joints; closed his eyes, and waited.

In a long, swinging arc the bridge began to fall.

Westgaard held grimly, trying to turn his face away from the nearing rock-wall.

He hit. The great bamboo protected all of him save arms and legs, from which hot radiating pains began to shoot through his trunk and to his head. And then the great suspending cable, with its myriad supporting cables of smaller size, took him on the head. The rock wall disappeared in the ensuing blackness an instant, and then Westgaard was conscious again. That his arms and legs had been jammed against the ravine had saved him from falling. The frightened bird was tearing at the hide through the cage, but the closeness of the mesh hindered the bird from reaching Westgaard.

Involuntarily Westgaard looked down, and then as rapidly away; he had seen little spread-eagled figures at the bottom of the chasm. His own pain had stopped him from hearing the half-dozen Taiyals' screams as they were snapped from the bridge.

Slowly, with increasing agony, Westgaard wormed his legs and arms from the rock, a thing impossible save for the rope-wound jointures which gave him space in which to move. He looked up despairingly, and then summoned the last of his sapped strength and, hand over hand, with one leg dangling freely, tried for the top of the ravine.

There was more effort, more labor, in that last thirty feet than in all of his flight. As Westgaard pulled himself to the crest at last, he heard two new alarming sounds: the crack of a gun, and the concentrated, ordered screaming of the Taiyals—a sound, this last, that would carry far, surely to any near village. The first meant nothing, for Westgaard could see that the half-breed shot with a revolver, and what good was that at this distance?

If the Taiyals were summoning men from neighboring villages, Westgaard knew he must hurry. What if a village were on this side of the ravine, an almost certain possibility? He would be cut off from the *aiyu-sen*—and die in whatever way the half-breed might devise from his experience.

Westgaard began to crawl along the path, his lips writhing to keep from whimpering with pain. A few yards of this and he attempted to stand upright. He found that one leg might be trusted to bear him and, unslinging the cage and using it in place of cane, he staggered along the path. How far he stumbled he did not know. He lost track of time, of distance, of anything save the terrific pain that racked upward to numb his brain.

Dimly, as if at a great distance, he heard a new wild answering cry to the shrieking of the Taiyals at the ravine. It came from—where? He tried to ascertain the direction, stared into the mass of fern but got no information from that—turned, staggered into the undergrowth, saw that the green fantastically became scarlet—then purple—and black, spattered with stars.

X

THERE had been little sleep in the small fort of the *aiyu-sen*. The two officers, Kokino and Dr. Noriko, had no desire to rest and talked together as they lay and smoked. Mumaka kept the soldiers awake; the boy had found a bag of hard brown peas and was letting them fall one by one into a wooden bowl as he recited the prayers for the dead in a high shrill voice.

Mumaka had exhausted every plea he could think of to force the little commandant to follow Westgaard with what force he had; Kokino had tried explaining to Mumaka what his orders were about leaving the *aiyu-sen*, and, since he desired doing the very thing he refused, he became at last harsh and mean with his words. This stopped Mumaka not at all, and Kokino took refuge in not answering the boy.

His *danna-san*, Mumaka felt, was dead, or as good as dead.

"He was a brave man," Noriko muttered, now. "All brave men are fools." He flicked his cigaret through the open port. "It is time we slept, but it is too bright for sleeping."

"Too bright," Kokino agreed. "I wonder if the white man is dead yet?"

Mumaka counted his peas fiercely, letting a half-dozen fall from his twitching fingers.

"He left much money for this boy here," the captain added. "Mumaka will be able to return to his village and buy the largest field there, as well as—"

"What is gold?" Mumaka wailed, breaking off his prayers.

"What indeed?" Noriko said soberly. "But Westgaard-san is wiser than most. He did not try to take it with him." He stood erect and stretched. "I am very tired, but I do not believe I will sleep just yet. Come, Kokino, let us walk around the place a bit, eh? It stinks in here. How long has it been since any of us washed?"

Kokino nodded.

"Let us go," he consented. "You, sergeant, blow out the light. It is not needed tonight."

The two men lighted cigarets again and walked choppily around the fort, neither speaking. They took five turns, then Kokino stopped and said evenly—

"Listen."

Noriko paused, strained to hear, and then said grimly—

"They are at their devil-business again." He looked squarely at the captain, and added, "There can be no doubt—the white man has found them—and not to his liking."

"Another head to their credit," Kokino muttered.

"And we talk of it!"

"What can I do, O fool? My orders are clear: I may not cross the guard-line unless attacked. I may not even go after one of my own soldiers who is taken. *Mah!* If I had my way—"

"We would probably all be dead, Captain. But sometimes death is better—" listening to the increasing din in the jungle—"than hearing it second-hand."

"He is a brave man," Kokino said thoughtfully. "If they torture him, he will last a long time."

"*Hai!* Do not talk of that, old friend—the noise is no less!"

Kokino was of the same opinion. His eye wandered to the guard who was outside the fence of the fort, and then up the *aiyusen* where, a hundred yards away, he could see another shadowy figure. He seemed undecided as to what might be done in the way of further precaution, when Noriko grabbed him by the arm.

"Look! Look!" Noriko whispered, and, as he spoke, had his automatic from his holster and pointed with it up the guard-line.

Two shadowy figures had climbed over the guard-line's electrified fence and were about a swift business with the unsuspecting soldier; they took him from behind, one on each side, dropped him to the ground, had him bound at arms and legs, and, with two long swings, heaved him across the wires, following him unbelievably fast. They stopped an instant, clamped sharp talon-like hooks into the body and, swinging it between them, started off.

On the far side of the fence both fell on their bellies as Noriko's gun cracked, paused the fraction of a moment and began to wriggle off. Noriko fired again, while Kokino barked orders to the men who rushed, armed, from the fort, then shouted loudly—

"Now you see how Amada went to the tree-top, Kokino!"

For the prostrate soldier was being snaked along the bare ground, to disappear into the undergrowth.

"They are bold," Kokino said sharply. "There is no appealing to the imagination in what was just done. I see where the talon-marks come in. It is a delicate touch. Yes, Amada went so up the tree. Well, we are going to make a night of it, Noriko! Something has happened that we do not know of. *Hai-ya!* but we may have some excitement at last."

Noriko's shot had brought a new volley of cries from the jungle—cries, and the first pattering of arrows. That such a situation was provided for was evident from Kokino's next swift action. He stepped to a short, grooved post, lifted the lid of a narrow canvas-covered box beside it, took out two short rockets, laid one on the groove and lighted it; before the first star burst he had the second rocket on its way.

"It is the wise thing," Kokino snapped, on his way to the fort. "To have ordered the other guards to come in means their death

before they get near enough for us to help them. They have a chance to get back to the village through the paths in the forest, for I believe the savages are mostly interested in us. *Mah!* I wish that Westgaard were here. I believe he is a man who could use a gun."

He saw that two men were on each side of the fort, guns at the loop-holes, and then directed the taking-off of the Hotchkiss' barrel-jacket.

"If this cat will only spit," he muttered, "there will be a great wailing in the Taiyal villages tonight. I wonder what Westgaard has done to them?"

"Sufficient!" Mumaka said suddenly. "He is a match for them all!"

"An hour ago, boy, I would have doubted that! Now—I am not so sure. He has them aroused, that is certain. Careful, sergeant! Not too near the port, *hito! Tatte mo suwatte, nedan wa onaji koto!* It is as cheap sitting as standing! They are very brave, these Taiyals—and so we might as well wait until they come closer before taking their courage out of them!"

They had not long to wait.

The undergrowth of the jungle, every path, spewed out natives who had discarded every garment save loin-cloth, yelling, gesticulating and doing the very thing Kokino hoped they would not: rushing the wire fence. Some carried bamboo stiles, others pulled themselves without hurt over the wire, and Kokino saw that they wore gloves and some sort of shoe.

"We can not wait and pick them off," he shouted. "Ready? Do not aim at nothing. Is the gun ready, sergeant? Let it sing, then, and spray these wild men with a rain they have never felt before."

"You can not kill them!" a soldier cried, as he ejected the last shell from his magazine and slipped in more. "I have hit one fellow three times, and he still comes. It is—"

What, all of the illiterate soldiers thought it was, save the officers, was audible now: *caw-caw-cawwww*—a triumphantly hideous crowing from somewhere in the near undergrowth.

"Stay on your own sides!" Kokino yelped. "They can not get at you, O fools! There is the big fence. There is the thorny wire inside. Shoot at what you see. They will never get close."

He hopped from side to side of the fort, now shoving his automatic through one loop-hole, now through another. His alert ears told him that the Hotchkiss was still at it, and he barked encouragement to the sergeant.

"Take their bravery out of them, my son! *Hai!* That is the way, back and forth, back and forth, and they will soon—*yoh!*" he screamed in anger.

The Hotchkiss, warmed at last, jammed.

"Close the port, close the port," Noriko yelled. "It is worthless now!"

The sergeant pushed his helper to the port, fumbling madly all the while with the lock-lever, cursing and snarling at the disabled gun's mechanism. The helper lifted a hand to swing the thick window shut, and then fell with a gusty sigh across the very gun.

"Number one!" Noriko said, and pushed the window shut himself. He bent over the dying man, stood upright, and said, "A bullet, Kokino. I think it is from the crow's gun, eh?"

THE soldiers fired steadily enough, while Kokino buzzed all about them. The captain liked the business less and less. Help would come as soon as the first guard reached the village, but he was afraid that help would come far too late. The savages were too many to count; they never stood still, but circled about millingly, cried on always by the hoarse crowing sound.

"I should like to wing that bird," Noriko said. "Our little man here is very dead."

Mumaka had been cowering on the floor. He came to his knees, and said weakly—

"I—wish his gun, Captain-san."

"*O! Mumaka ka?* I knew you were more than belly, boy. Take that hole there and —" knowing that the youngster could not shoot—"empty your gun as fast as you can at the thickest mass of savages you can see. *Hai-ya!* Noriko, they have got another one!"

They had, but with an arrow this time, and the stricken Japanese writhed and screamed. Noriko cut the shaft, looked at the contorted face of the soldier, pulled his bag to him and, the battle momentarily forgotten, found ether and cotton.

"There!" he said, shifting his bloody scalpel and pulling out the arrowhead with his fingers. "In a week he will be as good as—" and dropped slowly, his mouth wide

open with astonishment, beside the man he had so swiftly operated upon. He looked up at Kokino.

"They—are good marksmen," he said gently.

"Old friend—old friend—"

"Shoot! Keep them shooting," the valiant little doctor snarled. "I may die, but I am going to give these children of yours something to think about, if they are afraid!"

He lifted the red-bladed scalpel, dug it fiercely along the entering arrow-shaft, twisted it, while his immobile face moved a muscle, dug the blade from right to left, and with a yank pulled shaft and arrow from his flesh.

"Now," he screamed, "let me see how you can fight when you are forced to!"

Forced to they soon would be. The outer fence had been cut, had proved impotent to stop the brown men, who, inside at last, swarmed to the barbed wire; some fell, entangled, others climbed over their bodies.

"Shoot fast, shoot fast!" Kokino yelped.

What would happen when natives came near enough to shoot through the empty loopholes he did not like to think about—and, with the thought, the first spear protruded, and Kokino grabbed it before it could be thrown, and snapped the shaft with one fierce pull.

"Well done," Noriko moaned cheerfully from the floor.

"*Seppuku suru yori hoka ni shikata-ga-nai!*" Kokino burst out. "There is nothing left for it but to commit hara-kiri!"

At corners of the fort spears began to hack at the logs, to pry and lift at them, and safely, for none of the defenders could touch the enemy with bullets. To make matters worse, savages, under the direction of some hidden leader, were ramming branches into the loopholes, swinging down underneath, holding them in place, rendering the Japanese' guns one by one completely useless.

"They are blinding us," Mumaka wailed, and thrust his own gun-barrel through the loophole; unseen hands grabbed it, pulled it from him so that the stock caught against the wood of the fort's side.

"I am—too weak to use my hands," Noriko said pleasantly. "You will care for me—before yourself, Kokino? It would be *bushido*."

"I will not forget you," Kokino said sadly.

"Rats in a trap," Mumaka lamented. "And—" as the cawing sound came closer—"the crow will soon eat us."

"We will get a few more of them first," Kokino muttered. "All together, little sons of mine. Stand with me here. Has each man his bayonet in hand? Good! I see there are no cowards here. We will get a few of them before we pass into the first heaven. No, Noriko, I will never forget you. *Hai!* Do you remember that little song we used to sing when we were boys still in school? How does it go? 'Who shall twice live his youth? What flower faded blooms again?' Sing it, Noriko, if you have breath left in you."

Noriko began to sing, stopping again and again to collect his gasps into audible sound.

The fort was black as ink, only little gems of light showing where the loopholes had been jammed. The Japanese huddled together, listening futilely to the steady hacking at the wood.

"We felt sorrow for Westgaard-san," Kokino said at last. "He is doubtless in the first heaven by now, and feels the same for us. Well—" as a log slipped, squeaked against its fellows and then fell from place—"he need not watch our agony much longer. I will get one thrust at these Taiyal dogs, Noriko, and there will then remain two more—one for you, and one for me."

A second log was pushed to earth, and a third.

"Are you all ready, little men?" Kokino asked needlessly.

A soldier tried to sob his answer. Mumaka gone mad with terror, worried one hand with his teeth.

Kokino had never time for a second blow after the first, so fast was the pouring-in of screaming Taiyals. He heard Noriko asking querulously, "Are you forgetting me, Kokino?" and then a hurled spear took him between the eyes.

XI

FROM unconsciousness Westgaard had slipped unknowingly into heavy fatigue-induced sleep that lasted for hours before the pain in his leg throbbed him awake. He was unrefreshed in body but alert in mind. He pulled out his watch and found the crystal smashed and the mechanism stopped,

guessed from the graying light that day was not far off.

The stillness of the jungle elated Westgaard. He set about preparing to get across the *aiyu-sen* as speedily as possible. That the big half-breed would come after the eagle—the sacred bird worshiped as a super-crow by the Taiyals—he never doubted. He must give the Japanese time to make what plans they wished, and so give the Taiyals a reception in accordance with the good tastes of border warfare. He hoped that the half-breed might be reserved for himself.

The aching leg was stiff and sore, but supported him well enough. He tried putting his weight on it, and, after this test, realized that the limb was battered and bruised and painful, but unbroken. The eagle must be covered securely. He dared not risk the bird's setting up a clamor. Westgaard pulled off his shirt, tore it into strips, and wrapped them about the top half of the cage, then his undershirt, and, knotting the shirt-sleeves over sleeveless undergarment, made a fairly satisfactory covering. It prevented the bird from seeing anything.

The chill, dank mountain-jungle air made his skin prickle, it was like a bath that woke his body.

He had staggered into a great sea of vegetation, an exuberant entanglement of leaves and unodorous white waxen flowers, a throbbing surge of green life, but life that seemed incredible, exaggerated, innately harmful. Cable-like spiky creepers choked at the high ferns; as he pushed toward the place he guessed the path was they opened before him with a dull, gurgling sound. They closed behind him as if the jungle had stepped away to let him through, leisurely, contemptuously, but intended to bar his way against return.

Westgaard was wise enough, after taking ten paces, to know that he had not been that far distant from the path, and slowly attempted to retrace his steps to find the place where, sleeping, he had squashed the ferns to earth. A nameless spineless creature crawled unseen underfoot and burst with a *pop* as Westgaard's heel crushed it.

Try as he might, circle as he did, he could not find the place he had slept in; matted jungle surrounded him in every direction.

And then he knew that his ill-luck was the only thing that had saved him. To his right—where the path lay, indiscernible until actually one was upon it—he saw, through the greenish-gray darkness of the trees and ferns, Taiyals flitting past, gliding, indistinct, blending into the jungle like brown splotches of moss on the brown, smooth trunks. He thought that he counted four, but before he was certain they had vanished, seemingly without movement, as if the jungle had sucked them in with a deep intake of breath.

He waited, and, seeing no more, made his silent way toward the path. Before he stepped from the concealing ferns he peered along the path, trying to make certain that the Taiyals had not slipped from it and into ambush. He saw no speck of brown body and turned to leave the green gloom and take the path upward toward the guard-line. Stopped, silently, automatically.

More Taiyals approached his place of concealment. Their hair was black and stringy; they seemed slender, effeminate, and walked with a swinging grace only possible to one who is naked. But Westgaard had no eyes for this. What held his gaze as in a vise was what one of the Taiyals carried.

What Westgaard saw told him plainly that there was no help for him at the *aiyu-sen*. He stifled an exclamation, and for a fleeting instant rage turned his face white and quivering; then he stood stock-still again. As more Taiyals swung jauntily along the path he realized how thoroughly they had done their work. Guns, logs of wood, cooking-pots, the dismantled Hotchkiss followed in mute testimony the head of Mumaka.

Westgaard's eyes were fixed and immovable on one spot along the trail; he felt that his slightest change in position would throw him into that action he bitterly desired, and that would be so very useless. And so he did not see the half-breed until the man was actually in that line of vision. Despite the success of the raid on the *aiyu-sen* the Chinese breed did not seem happy; his lips mumbled, and his forehead was wrinkled with thought. What he carried under his arm dripped, or had dripped, red bubble-like drops over his black clothes.

The white man saw him plainly and marked every feature in the evil face.

More Taiyals. From their placid faces Westgaard knew that the massacre had taken place some hours ago at least, and that the Taiyals had taken some other path

in going to the guard-line for the attack.

He did not venture from his hiding-place until many minutes had elapsed after the passing of the last savage. When he did, finally, his face was a weird picture and matched his trembling, shambling gait and naked torso; he seemed at first glance a man broken and frightened silly, at second, a man near to succumbing to tremendous and burning rage.

His hands twitched, his face and eyes twitched, his mouth opened and shut; he seemed to have lost control of every muscle. In this wise, with the eagle-cage in his hand, he swayed up the path. Slowly; reason, which had kept him quiet and concealed before left him, and a grim red haze settled before him, a state of mind the combination of strain, fatigue, pain and a wild overwhelming anger.

He shifted the cage from right hand to left, and, the gun pointed straight up the path, plodded stubbornly ahead, ready, overwilling, to contest the way with the first-appearing savage, or band of them. He did not consider that all might have passed. He did not consider at all now.

His eyes had become blue-black, the color of cabochon sapphires, and as hard. In some uncanny way the jumping pain in his bruised leg had entirely vanished, consumed, as it were, in the flaming fire that burned within him.

He actually took several steps on the bare ground of the guard-line before his eyes conveyed the message to him and told him where he stood. The wire fence of the *aiyu-sen* was intact, the fort, with its entanglements and wood-slabbed building, was as completely gone as if a magic hand had swept it into the jungle.

Westgaard had not the bodily energy left to vault his great frame over the wire. Instead, he burrowed at the ground, pawing the earth like a dog and throwing damp masses at his own sweat-cold skin until it took on the color of a native. On his belly he crawled through the hole he made, pulling the cage behind him, and then turned wearily to the right.

There was left of the fort no visible thing. Only a single crow feather was struck in the ground where the fort had been; even the traces of cooking-fires had been removed.

Westgaard said aloud:

"I forced their hand. He's tried to make it look supernatural. I hope the Taiyals slice him apart and boil his head, now he hasn't got the eagle. No, I don't. I want him myself."

Whether or not the path between *aiyu-sen* and village was infested with Taiyals Westgaard did not wonder about. What had happened to other forts along the *aiyu-sen*—he could see none, and knew they must be very distant—worried him none. He wanted to get back to the village. Alone, he could do nothing. Help could come only where there was a telegraph line. If there had been lines laid to the fort it was rather obvious that the half-breed had seen to their cutting, or had concealed them with branches.

The start of the path was obliterated, but Westgaard made for a narrow opening in the first trees of the jungle, found it to be the beginning of the way to the village, and started on the foot-trail as swiftly as he was able.

Of the walk through the jungle he could never remember anything, nor much more of his reception at the village.

To the frightened villagers he must have presented a horrible sight. The four soldiers who had made their way there began to shoot at him as soon as he passed the camphor-stills, taking him, with his earth-stained body, for the forerunner of the savages; not until he raised his voice and shouted to them in croaking Japanese did they stop. How nervous they were was proved by the fact that none of the bullets came anywhere near him.

QUESTIONS were poured at him by the thousand: Where was Captain Kokino? And his boy? And the soldiers? And what had happened? And what did he have in that great bundle? And how many hundred Taiyals had been killed? And what was it all about?

Westgaard said, "Is there a telegraph?" in sole answer.

They assured him that there was, but that the operator was in Karahito at the funeral of his father's brother, a very honorable man, and a priest as well, who had given in his life much money to—

"A hand-car?" Westgaard asked, finding each word more difficult to get out than the last.

There was. But who dared push it for him? Or, rather, operate the shoe-brake,

since all of the journey was downhill? Once they were outside the village, the forest-devils would sweep down on them.

Westgaard argued a moment, told them that the Taiyals had gone back to their villages to celebrate their awful head-rites; tired of argument before he was half done, and said dully to show him the hand-car, and then to push it to the start of the incline for him.

As he was directed by all of the throng—men and women, with many children on the outer ring—a little blear-eyed Japanese shouldered his way to Westgaard's side.

"*Komatta mono da,*" the Japanese said. "It is all very annoying, not to have the telegraph man here. What did you want to wire?"

Westgaard looked at him, but said nothing.

The bleary Japanese gave himself a new officious air.

"And what have you got under your shirts?" he asked, looking intently at the concealed cage. "*Hai!* I will look and see."

Before the white man could stop him he had plucked a bit of hide up and peered in.

"So you have—" he said, and then Westgaard clipped him on the chin.

The crowd drew back, astonished. True, the bleared Japanese was no favorite; that one did nothing but hang about at the drinking-shop, but was he not generous with his money, of which he always had plenty? This *seiyo-jin* had doubtless been made mad by what he had seen and gone through. Nevertheless one coolie, braver than the rest, asked gently—

"Why, *danna-san?*"

"He is number one," Westgaard said jerkily. "He knew too much."

And he stooped, tying the fellow's arms and legs behind him with the ragged waistband of his kimono.

The ride of the crazed *seiyo-jin*—none remember that he took with him his draped bird-cage and the bound Japanese—is still talked of in the Taiwan hills.

Controlled always by cautious, fearful Japanese, the descent of the hand-cars had always been almost as slow as the climb; brake-shoes lasted never more than three months. But the crazy foreigner had merely lain at full length on the car, the Japanese beside him, where he could be watched, and, after the car had been pushed to the beginning of the long downward grade, merely lay where he was, with never a hand going to the brake-lever.

Over bridges and around hairpin turns the car shot, always with more momentum than was necessary to gain the short infrequent ascents. When the Japanese came to life again he tried to pray, but the wind whipped the words from his mouth before they were ever uttered.

Across the rice-fields the car pounded at last, and into the village. The white man raised himself stiffly when the car stopped and gave the villagers something to talk of.

Hai! The sight it was! The big *seiyo-jin*, brown as any savage and streaked with sweat that made white lines in the dirt, had picked up the bundle in one hand and the Japanese under the other arm, and carried them as easily, mark you, as if each had been a bottle of rice-wine! He asked his way once, and with never a word of thanks went straight to the railroad-telegraph office.

Before he had been inside more than five minutes every man in the village was gathered outside; when he finally returned it was with every available employee of the railroad surrounding him, the blear-eyed Japanese, who had been more expertly bound, and the covered cage. And the station-men were armed. *Mah!* As if they were after tigers in the days of good hunting. One, who apparently could find no other weapon, carried as instrument of war his flute, to which he had lashed a long fish-gutting knife with curved blade.

It lacked a half-hour of train-time, but quick hands uncoupled all of the cars save one, and the little fireman performed wonders in way of stoking; once the blear-eyed Japanese raised a wailing cry and several men in the crowd started to edge toward him, thought better of it as the station-master brought his gun to his shoulder and contented themselves with silence, hoping that they had not been marked.

The engine coughed, shook itself and, as the excited engineer opened his throttle too wide, ground its wheels impotently for a hundred or more revolutions, snorted, took a new start, and, slowly gaining momentum, swung forward.

"*Hai-ya!*" the station-master said to Westgaard. "We have been ordered to go

as fast as we can—and it is all down hill until you take the other train at the junction. A train will be ready for you there. You will be in Taihoku before you know it."

He looked at the white man curiously.

"Is there anything you want?" he asked. "Let me give you my jacket? Or Kumagawa's here. He is larger. Or—"

"Water," Westgaard croaked.

"I will get some from the engineer," the official agreed. "You are what—hmm—you are very dirty, and will wash, of course. I will find rags—waste—and a pan, and—"

"Water," Westgaard mumbled again.

The Japanese peered into the white man's face a second, then shouted, "I am a fool!" and dashed on the errand.

Westgaard let the warm liquid trickle down his throat, then began to drink in great gulps. He said, "Thank you," sat, hands clasped together wearily, and then asked in a hoarse cracked voice for cigarets. A packet, and matches, were given him. He sat smoking moodily until the train was at transfer-point, saying nothing; walked to the other waiting train of engine and car, with no eye for the soldiers swarming about the station, many of them in the car itself. He felt lax, sodden, beaten completely down. A Japanese draped a coat over his bare back but he made no effort to raise his arms and thrust them into the sleeves.

He had failed utterly at everything he had attempted, at everything save discovery of the principal figure in the thing, and that had been done unplanned, by accident. The sun-crow was the eagle, of course. Fear of it was widespread. Why? Had it become a symbol? Probably. Of what? He—he didn't care, now.

His definite purpose had been to get camphor. In place of that, he had lost Mumaka his life, had caused directly the deaths of Kokino, Noriko and the men of the *aiyu-sen*—and all for what? A bird! All of this had happened because he'd been unable to get to the *aiyu-sen* in time. He told himself bitterly that if it had been *his* life that had been in danger he could have carried on, knowing weakly that it was not true.

What was the use of thinking? He sat on the long car-seat, glum, despondent, smoking cigaret after cigaret until the packet was exhausted, and then simply sat, blank of mind.

XII

WESTGAARD had hardly moved when the train came to a sudden stop, with much grinding of wheels, at the Taihoku station. The car emptied of men, leaving him sitting, the cage beside him, as sick at heart as ever; a hand touched his arm, and he looked slowly up, to see Kagowo standing over him.

"Well, I see that we will eat the bird, instead of the bird eating you," he said gaily. Then, as Westgaard stood up slowly, rigidly, "*Mah!* Has it been as bad as that?"

Westgaard said nothing, and Kagowo clucked sympathetically.

MEN in khaki made a semicircle about the car-steps, and with them were keen-eyed Japanese in civilian clothes, one with the erect carriage of an officer in mufti; Kagowo, carrying the cage, alighted first, whispered swiftly to the officer, bore down the other's mute objection with a flow of words, handed him the cage and placed his hand on Westgaard's arm.

"*Watakushi no yado o tomari nasare.* You will stay this night with me. All of us are anxious to hear what you know, for your wire told us little. But first you must be refreshed. You are in no condition to talk. You hear strange sounds buzzing in your ears, eh? Your eyes ache, and you are very cold. Come. We will see these others later. In an hour, my friends. Come, Westgaard-san."

Kagowo's house was near the base of Marumaya, and from the upper windows the great lotus pond was visible; Westgaard had no eye for this, nor for anything. Kagowo had clapped his hands before he and the guest were actually in the house, bawling, "*O cha yo! O yukata yo!* Some tea! a bath gown for my guest!" and, giving a backward glance that told him the three soldiers who had accompanied them were alert, hurried Westgaard into the house, into a boiling tub, and then proceeded to see that the white man filled himself with tea. After the fourth cup had been consumed Kagowo went to a tiny cupboard and drew out a black glass bottle.

"This is not the raw new whisky that is shipped from Scotland," he said, and poured Westgaard a stiff drink.

A flush came to the white man's cheeks. Bath, tea and stimulant warmed his body, but his head was as cold, his mind as unhappy, as ever. He spoke for the first time since entering the house.

"Thank you, Kagowo-san. It's all wasted. I've made a mess of everything."

"Let us judge of that after we have heard your story," Kagowo said. "*Mah!* Those trousers of yours need a cleaning! Mine will fit you poorly, but are better than none, and we will find a warm padded Chinese kimono for you." He yelled his desire, and a boy brought clothes. "There; put those on, Westgaard-san, and we will go to the office before the others have bitten their nails too deeply."

Westgaard nodded.

As the house-boy picked up the trousers Westgaard said suddenly, in almost a normal voice, "Give them to me a moment, boy," took them, and dug his hand into a pocket.

"What have you there?" Kagowo asked curiously. "Did you transfer your money and papers to them before you lost your coat? I thought you left everything valuable with me before you departed for the hills."

"I took these—when I took—the bird," Westgaard said.

Kagowo did not ask to see them, but he grinned all over his face at this news. He said, "*Hai-ya!*" and seemed very pleased, for he flipped the house-boy a copper coin—a thing he had not done since his first man-child had been born.

Four men waited for Kagowo and Westgaard at the office; all rose and bowed as the two entered Kagowo's own room, and Westgaard saw that the cage, uncovered, stood on the table in the room's middle.

"So that is the bird that caused the trouble," Kagowo said, examining it before he sat beside Westgaard. "Well—they can get another, I expect."

Westgaard had not thought of that. Of course they could—and that took from him the one thing he had accomplished.

"Now," Kagowo said, sucking in his breath, "now tell us the story."

Westgaard told it.

He offered no comments of his own, ever. He told it from start to end, apathetically, as if it had happened to some one else. When he had finished he seemed to slump into his chair.

"And what would you do now?" Kagowo asked gently. "If you were in our place, what would you do?"

Westgaard's very dejected attitude made the words more forceful.

"I would drive them both ways toward the ravine," he said. "Prevent them from escaping the other ways—and drive them into it—with the half-breed going in last, so he could see the others fall."

"I should like to," Kagowo agreed.

"They killed my boy, who followed me although he was frightened, and then—"

"Noriko was my wife's brother," Kagowo said simply. "I love them none the more for that."

The officer in civilian clothes said:

"We have not enough men to cover hundreds of miles, Kagowo-san. Nor would my superiors at home allow—"

"Have I said what we might do, Takasumi?" Kagowo asked. "You take too much for granted. I want to kill these Taiyals, yes. But far more I want the man at the head of this thing! Does he do it for *them? Mah!* Never in the world. He—or they, if there are more than one—wish to frighten us. Why? We are not sure, but all of us can guess. I say this, then: Let us be frightened! Let us decide that too many things have happened in the hills—too many lives lost. Let us say that it is becoming hard to get coolies because they are all afraid—and then let us see what happens! A head will bob up, I tell you, and say, '*I* am not afraid to go into the hills'—for a price. And, my friends, I think that price is going to be a camphor concession!"

"It goes far, this thing," Takasumi agreed grimly. "There is much money in it. But there is another angle, Kagowo. From what I have heard the natives think that the sun-crow—this eagle—is the gods' messenger to tell them to drive out the Japanese—ourselves."

"Cat's-paw work," Kagowo snorted. "It is all a question of money to be made! Sometimes I sicken at the sight of gold—and then I write my superiors that I am poorly paid here, considering what I undergo. That is the way of it. Now, Westgaard-san, may we see those papers you took from the Taiyal hut?"

Westgaard handed them over.

Heads bent over the Chinese characters, reading rapidly down and up from right to left.

"It tells little enough," Kagowo said at

last. "But it can be made sufficient to hang this man—if we find him!"

"What does it say?" Westgaard asked, half uncaring.

"It tells the time of the flying of the crow," Kagowo snapped. "It is all very cautious. It says nothing—and everything! For *you* have told us what the flying of the crow meant. The rest is of no value—a sort of diary. Food. The attitude of the natives, who worshiped the eagle as a god, and the half-breed nearly as much. I should like to be there when he tries to explain what happened to his precious sun-crow. But—"

"He will get another," Westgaard said.

"Agreed. And we will let him have his way. We will have operations stopped in most of the camphor camps. Now. This moment. And then we will sit and wait."

"He will smell a trap," another suggested. "Knowing that Westgaard-san has escaped, and has told us the story, he will abandon his plans."

"Such plans are not laid to be easily broken," Kagowo said firmly. "I take the matter to be this: The half-breed represents some one. Perhaps himself. Others are in with him. Who? We want to find out. What avail to jail or kill some foolish coolies, or even paid Japanese criminals, who go about doing his work—for gold—and calling themselves the sun-crows? If we do not stop this matter, we will have it to contend with again and again. Now. We want the half-breed to show his hand. Some one must speak of it, and through him much may be traced. We think the half-breed may become frightened, because Westgaard has stolen some papers from him. But what can we do to raise this —— spirits?"

"I could say I'd lost them," Westgaard said doubtfully.

"No," Kagowo said, grinning. "We are going to have you killed, my friend, and find your body with the papers missing! Of course you spoke of them to us, but we do not ever see them! *Hai-ya!* We must waste no time about this business. Come! I will tell you what to do, and you will do it sensibly, being a man of sense. Good-by, my friends. The curtain is ready for the first act, and one that may prove more to our liking!"

He hustled Westgaard from the building and into a waiting *kuruma*, bowed to him, winked, said suddenly in halting English, "The play begins," and then continued in anguished Japanese:

"If we had known how much use you might be, *seiyo-jin*, we would have been kinder to you when you first came. We apologize for our hard words before you went into the hills. We apologize—and *now* will you give us what you have in your pocket?"

Westgaard said in a harsh voice—

"No!"

"You still insist that you will take them to Japan, even before we see them? I lose much caste in standing here and arguing with you—"

"They go with me. You may not see them."

Kagowo raised his voice.

"You are a pig and the son of pigs," he yelped. "Take care that I do not take them away from you! I will even pay you well! They are of no value to you, but only to us, or to the sun-crows! Well, go, then—to the foreign hotel and take a room over the garden" he concluded swiftly in English.

WESTGAARD gave the order to the *kurumaya*, and, as the rubber-tired cart whirled up the street, knew that he was being followed.

The foreign-style hotel was on the broad street and not far from the Office. Westgaard was soon in his room on the second floor. He began to brood, the while he walked restlessly, his leg still throbbing, about the room. He had stopped long enough downstairs to buy a package of English-made cigarets, and, as he scratched a match, tried to pull himself together.

What had happened was over. Done. He had, true, failed. If there was a chance for him to square matters for Mumaka's death he wanted to do it. There came over him a new, dull rage at the motive force of the whole matter. Why hadn't he been left in Okonai, in his quiet peaceful house, with Mumaka about to yell at cheerfully.

Why had Heald sent him to attempt the impossible? Impossible it had surely proved. He thought of hot words for Heald, but realized that the fellow would spread out his hands and ask what fault it was of his.

Five minutes—ten, then he heard a soft knock on the door.

"There is no time to be lost," Kagowo

said, sticking in his head. "We were as quick as possible. It took a little time, for we had to be careful. Now. Bring it in quickly."

He stood to one side, and two Japanese, whom Westgaard recognized as being silent participants in the conference, carried a body into the room; that of a white man.

"He is very dead," Kagowo said. "He was a stowaway on a tramp, and died this morning. Now—off with that kimono, Westgaard-san. Here, I will put it on this unfortunate man, who, I think, serves more from being dead than he ever did in life, if appearances are anything! Now, on the floor with him. So. Pull his trousers pocket inside out. Good! I thought first of having you play at being dead, Westgaard-san, but was afraid that a knife might have been stuck in you just to make certain. Now, let us get into that closet, all of us, and see what we see."

They waited so long that Westgaard believed Kagowo's complicated plan was silly.

He said—

"You were seen coming here, Kagowo-san."

"I was not seen. I came in the main way," the Japanese disagreed. "And what will happen will happen at the back. *Mah!* The boy downstairs was asked by a coolie what room you were in. The coolie said that he had baggage of yours to bring. Now, let us wait."

Westgaard turned very cold as a head peered in over the window-sill. Kagowo, excited, nudged him. The intruder looked swiftly about the room, saw the prostrate figure on the floor, hopped inside and was at the dead man's pockets. He snarled, but not with surprize, guessing that others had been there before him.

A second head came to the sill, and the two threw savage polyglot words at each other, part Chinese, part Japanese, part native; the second man turned the body so the face showed, and satisfied himself that it was that of a white man; then, drawing in his breath violently, pointed, jabbering excitedly.

On the chest, where the shirt had been torn open, was painted a tiny crow, and through the cloth itself a crow-feather had been thrust. The two coolies looked at each other and grinned broadly and wickedly. What they thought was apparent in their faces, and they were doubly pleased when one discovered that the paint was still wet.

Before they slid over the window-sill again and made their way to the ground both stopped long enough to kick the figure on the floor.

Kagowo held Westgaard firmly until the coolies were out of sight, and for a minute after that.

"Sweet little gentle animals," Kagowo snapped, finally, releasing Westgaard. "For a moment I was afraid that you would have cracked their heads together—and that would have spoiled everything. Now they will report that some one of their flock has been here ahead of them. Questions will be asked, of course, but I have taken the precaution already to order my men to seize one of these sun-crows—and the others will think it is his work, and that he has gone to report to some other superior who will pass the word on to one still higher. *Hai-ya!* Now you are dead, Westgaard-san, and we must keep you so! I can assure you that I am going to make an awful to-do about your murder! There will be cables sent to Yokohama that would take a month's pay from me—if I had to pay the bill. And the news will leak out how angry we are. We will say that you had a something we wanted, and that it was stolen.

"Yes," he finished, "you are dead, and we will keep you so! You leave Taihoko tonight in a closed automobile, you leave Kiirun this same night on a freighter—slow and awful, but I myself will see that there is a cook on it, and proper food—and even when you get back to Yokohama you may still be dead. But it may not be necessary then—in the week, or more, if you have bad weather, for this boat is very slow, you will discover that we have found out something. Otherwise—well, you will be told what is what at Yokohama, my friend.

Westgaard said:

"Thank you, Kagowo. I suppose I ought to be glad I'm living."

"You have been very lucky."

Westgaard shut his eyes tightly.

"Lucky? To be forced to return home to my superiors and say, 'I did nothing, so—'"

"You did what you could," Kagowo said.

"You call that lucky? And to have the little fellow I raised from a temple-brat killed? A boy who looked up to me, and

considered me as his father, who actually prayed for me—and to me."

"You did what you could," Kagowo repeated, mutteringly. "If I had my way—" He stopped, looked about him anxiously, and saw that the other Japanese were talking together, then, glancing up at the white man's newly ravaged face timidly, said, "I—I should like—to think you were my friend, Westgaard-san, sent by the gods to take the place of Noriko, who was as my own father's son to me. He was a brave man, Noriko. I—I loved him. *Mah!*—" realizing that it was not *bushido* for him to show sorrow—"I talk too much!"

Westgaard said nothing, but as Kagowo walked with him down the hotel corridor the Japanese could not keep still.

"There will be prayers for Noriko until the city is wreathed with incense," he said. "And we will never forget your boy, either. Two brave men in heaven. If—if I ever see that half breed, Westgaard-san, I will send him after them, and they will have the gods give him a torturing the like of which has never been heard of before."

He began to speak more rapidly after that, of half conceived plans, of everything, anything, almost without sense. When he hurried Westgaard into a blind-drawn automobile he popped in a moment beside him, shook his hand, barked a farewell, in short did everything possible to keep the white man from knowing that he was close to tears, for Noriko's death had meant more to him than the honorable code permitted him to show.

XIII

BEFORE the *Shizu Maru* reached Yokohama, Westgaard believed more than once that Kagowo's statement "that he was dead" might become the truth. Not three hours of slow steaming out of Kiirun and the barometer began to drop, tumbling with such rapidity that the captain was restrained from returning to port only by his definite orders to proceed directly to Yokohama with his apparently important passenger. He was a cautious man, and had a tiny share in the *Shizu*.

The Japanese captain faced the ship into the wind, moving his lips nervously as the distant muttering began to close in on him and to become a thin, expanding sound that rattled his eardrums. The silky swell metamorphosed into black hills and hollows, the crests rolling and unbroken; the first puff of wind about the *Shizu* broke the wave-tops into spume like the froth on skimmed milk; the second and the thousandth came all at once.

The *Shizu* became an unmanageable cowpony; whirled and danced and reared and sunfished. She poked her nose into the rusty water and held it there while sea after sea tried for her life; she seemed a party to the destruction and rolled on her side, while the racing engine clanked and bickered with the racked plates.

The officers, captain and mates decided that the *seiyo-jin* passenger was made of iron. He was with them most of the time; he took the torrents of water when they did and came up from every deluge with a face seemingly gaunter, sterner. Once a flying bolt, handled by the wind like a piece of crumpled paper, hit him across the face and gashed his cheek; he wiped away the blood, not even swearing. He was, they decided, a man who had a heart of steel.

He had not. One who could have examined his head would have found that he was suffering intensely, that he was taking on himself the blame for everything that had happened, was figuring what he might have done about this or that. He had become very silent. A "yes" or "no" was the most he had to say. He still wore the padded kimono Kagowo had given him, although the captain had offered him a jacket; trousers there were none that would fit him.

A strange figure, Westgaard, on the bridge of the rusty *Shizu*. His kimono flapped like the wings of a gull seeking height. Water streamed from his face and matted his hair. When he slept none knew, but he ate—or rather drank many cups of coffee—with the captain.

When the boats were swept away, to join other of the ship's paraphernalia in the boiling water, the captain screamed this information into his ear, and the white man did not deviate from his other conversation. He said, "Yes," and stared into the white crests ahead that sucked at the *Shizu*. The engineer stumbled up to the bridge, yowled something into the captain's ear that was no good news, and the officer became close to panic-stricken; he wavered, decided to run with the wind, actually put her over and

took the running, irregular seas broadside—and then put her back again, rewarded for his indecision by a new wild creaking of the plates.

The little *Shizu* made Yokohama on a sunny, cold morning, her head down from water in the forward hold, and the officers consulted as to the amount they would give to the ocean god. There was no other way to explain their arrival, although some of the crew said that it had not been for the *seiyo-jin* the storm would have never touched them at all. This was attested to, they said, by the fact that the *Gingo-Markoso Maru*, which had cleared from Kiirun three days later, had actually beaten them into Yokohama, having taken a more easterly course, and—which they forgot—having new Deisel engines and a little matter of an experienced captain and a few thousand tons to boot.

As the *Shizu* swung placidly past Oshima the captain again offered Westgaard a jacket, but the white man refused. His padded kimono was dry, and warm enough. What else mattered—if anything mattered?

The kimono was fit garb for the man. Salt had dried on it, and made long streaks of gray. Water had soaked through it, even to the padding, and made the cloth hang stiff, in strange jagged lines, proof that what little sleep the white man had had was taken in his wet attire. The *Shizu* was four days late, even for her own slow time; the white man had never shaved, and a stubble of whiskers stuck out, making his face even more gaunt. A man, at a guess, who had risen from a sickbed, and who would speedily return to it.

His eyes had the dull glazed brightness of fever, although there was no color to his cheeks, on one of which a brilliant scar, kept from healing by the ceaseless whip of salt spray, made a wordless talisman, but one that had never protected him from evil.

He leaned stolidly, for all his seething thoughts, against the rail of the *Shizu* as a puffing tug bore down on her. The *Shizu* stopped, wearily, as if doubtful that she might ever go again.

"Westgaard! Westgaard!" a voice hailed from the tug.

Westgaard said dully—

"Yes?"

"*Hai-ya! Do ka nasaimashita ka?* Is there anything the matter with you?"

"No."

"Come, then. There is no time to lose! Captain, throw us a rope! Slide down it, Westgaard-san! *Mah!* We have waited for you, but feared you would arrive too late for the fun. Give me your hand. You are a brave man, Westgaard-san."

Westgaard was on the tug's deck.

"No," he repeated.

The tug dropped the rope at once, and, whistle screaming and smoke coming from her short stack in black puffs, darted up the bay, hooting a half-speed Pacific liner out of the way.

The official beside Westgaard sensed the other's thoughts.

"You are not very happy," he said in surprize.

For a third time Westgaard said, "No," and, tired to death, stared straight ahead of him. He wanted one thing—to be left alone. That would be refused him. He would be forced to talk and talk, when he wanted what every beaten dog deserved, a quiet and secluded corner to crawl into, and lick his wounds.

On shore, the decrepit automobile dashed over familiar streets, and the rattling unloosed the petty official's tongue again, despite his companion's taciturnity.

"We will be at your office—the office of your company—in a few moments more, Westgaard-san. I should like to come in with you, but it is against all orders. *Mah!* There will be something happening there, I can tell you! And there has been plenty happening to you, if your face tells a truthful story. You will find out—"

"What?" Westgaard said, his eyes showing the first spark of interest.

"That I do not know," the official said sadly. "I am not a high secretary. All that I was told was to bring you the moment the *Shizu* was sighted. I am not in the confidence of the important men. But something is in the wind, even if I do not know what."

He gabbled on happily, but the white man was too exhausted to listen, nor would he have learned anything of importance even if he had been actually alert.

The calm stone front of the company's offices brought to Westgaard a sudden hot anger; he had failed—that was all they'd care about. And then even this last flame flickered out, leaving him, as he stepped from the machine and across the narrow sidewalk to the door, a man thoroughly

beaten, and, from every appearance, cowed by it. How exhausted he was he did not realize, but, with a new hand on his arm, he shambled, head down, along the linoleum floor, going where he was taken with never a word.

XIV

THE new guide was a messenger boy—the old boy had strangely left employment days before—and, as he walked beside Westgaard—the outer office staring—whispered into his ear:

"Know nothing, Westgaard-san. Speak as little as possible. When the proper time comes, remember that we will be outside. And sit in the dark. Find a corner. This is the room. Things will happen. But we will be ready for them at the proper time."

Westgaard gave no sign that he had heard, but, when the boy opened an office door, he stumbled in.

The first voice he heard was Heald's

"Get out!" came to his ears. "We have no money for bums! Get out of here before I kick you out."

And then a little rumble—there would be a new boy tending the door if this happened again.

Westgaard's eyes came slowly off the floor.

"I'm here," he said wearily. "I'm back."

A distant voice—Carstairs'.

"It's Westgaard!"

Westgaard conquered the dizziness, that threatened to turn the room black.

"Westgaard," he agreed. "I—think I'll sit down."

Carstairs had a chair for him.

"We thought you were dead," the manager shouted, his hand on Westgaard's limp one. "We got a wire from Taiwan. Lord, old man, but I'm glad you're alive. We were sure you were dead!"

"Instead of that," Heald said crisply, "he is merely dead drunk—and has probably been so for all these weeks! What did I tell you, sir? I had information in this office that assured me Westgaard was merely going to Formosa on just such an errand. Wasting the firm's money. Getting drunk like a coolie. Ugh!"

Westgaard had no desire to argue with him. He turned slowly in his chair, and fought to open his eyes wider. Heald had been addressing the Old Man—did the Old Man believe him?

Two pair of eyes met, and then the head of the company heaved himself ponderously from his seat.

"Shake hands, George, you old sinner," he said. "What the —— if you have been on a bat? The job was impossible. And we've been drunk more'n once together. But"—quizzically—"it must have been a wonderful jag while it lasted, George! You're all in."

"All in," Westgaard said.

"We old fellows—" Westgaard was twenty years his junior—"have got to get out of the way when the youngsters step, George," the Old Man said, sitting again. "Why, Heald here has engineered a deal that'll make your eyes pop, George. He's done what you couldn't do in a million years."

Westgaard kept his lip from curling.

He said again—

"Yes."

No one spoke, and Westgaard found Carstairs watching him intently. In his face there appeared a growing conviction, and one that Westgaard did not intend should be voiced. He summoned what sense he had, and said—

"Is there any news, Will?"

Carstairs would not be put off.

"George, I don't believe you've had a drink since—"

"Since I left Taihoku; no. Is there any news?"

"Nothing—except this business."

"What business?"

"The thing you failed at—camphor!" Heald snapped.

Westgaard stood up slowly.

"This light hurts my eyes," he said, remembering. "I'll sit in a corner," and did it.

"A jag didn't use to knock you out for a week after," the Old Man said. "You're getting old, George."

"He's sick!" Carstairs said sharply. "He hasn't been drinking."

Heald laughed shortly.

"Permit us to be the judge of that, Mr. Carstairs," he said suavely, thereby including his chief with himself. "If ever I saw a man suffering from after-effects of liquor I see one now." The man suddenly recalled the biting ants Mumaka had loosed at Okonai. "And he was the same in the north district. Drunk half the time, sir. All of the natives—"

"Will you please go to ——?" Carstairs whipped out.

Before Heald could protest at this language Westgaard said queerly—

"I think he will—but I am not sure of that yet."

"What do you mean?" Heald shouted.

Westgaard was not forced to answer; the boy knocked at the door, and announced gently, "Wilson-san," and bobbed out of sight, pushing the door wide open. Heald came immediately to his feet to greet the newcomer, and even the Old Man and Carstairs faced the door with interest. Westgaard, however, went more deeply into his corner. The boy had winked at him meaningly.

At the newcomer's first word of greeting, casual, easy, Westgaard squirmed in his seat; when he looked upward swiftly and saw the stranger his heart began to pound the wall of his chest, and he gripped the chair-arms to keep from rising.

What he saw was this: A man immaculate in blue serge, with matching cravat and handkerchief; a big man, self-confident, assured, almost patronizing. He was shaved; his hair, blue-black, was slicked carefully away from his forehead; he was perfumed, and his ringed fingers had been very recently polished of nail. They were oily, those fingers, as if some excrescence oozed from them.

None of this had startled Westgaard. But the face, unmistakably, was that of the half-breed Chinese. There could be no doubt. The same evil face and slanting eyes, the same half sneer—

Westgaard went cold.

His hands on the chair-arms began to twitch, and, with a tightening of his lips, he controlled them. He let his head droop forward, and, to heighten the picture, began to snore gently.

"Ah!" the half-breed named Wilson said. "It is good to be back in a civilized land again! I missed my bath and—er—the comforts of home, one might say. But it has been well worth it, my friends. I have been—er—very successful."

Heald was rubbing his hands.

"I knew that you would be, when you first gave me an inkling of the plan," he said. "It is very wonderful. I can hardly believe—"

Wilson bowed.

"A simple thing," he said, waving a hand.

"I'm in the dark," Carstairs suggested meaningly. "This is all over my head."

"What quaint mannerisms you Americans have," Wilson said, smiling. "In England— Ha! 'Over a head' is excellent. Well put, what? I must remember that."

He took a carefully graceful position in his chair, and then said—

"Who is the—er—Jap person, is it?—in the corner, Mr. Heald?"

"He's not Japanese," Heald said. "His own clothes were probably taken from him while he was drunk. He is a—well—a former employee. Tell him to get out, Carstairs, or to quit that snoring, anyhow!"

HEALD did not want Westgaard out; he wanted him awakened, so he might hear how a better man than he had succeeded.

"My poor father—a most saintly missionary, my dear Heald—said often that strong drink was a mocker. It is sad to see a man fallen so, eh? I should not think thus except that I have a tender heart, a heart that has cost me much money through its mercies."

Westgaard moved in his chair, and huddled the deeper, snoring only at far-spaced intervals.

"I've explained most of the deal to my superior," Heald said, after a short lull. "He said, of course, that it was impossible. He based his opinion on the fact that two of our men went to Taiwan and failed completely. For you to have succeeded is nothing short of the miraculous. I pride myself that from the moment you spoke of the thing to me I believed you would do it. Of course, the company put faith in its own men—and so I really was forced to prove to them their error. It took, I may say, a man in a million to do it."

"Thank you, dear Heald," the half-breed said, getting to his feet. "At all events, it is done. I am not one to—er—boast. I will not say how the thing was done, nor with what personal suffering. I congratulate you, old thing, on your judgment. It has been verified. You and I—"

"Why don't you kiss and get it over with?" Carstairs bellowed.

The breed looked blank.

"Kiss?" he said. "I do not understand."

"He is being facetious," Heald grated.

"He only makes himself foolish. He does not understand—"

"And doesn't want to," Carstairs said. "Get down to business. If this is a gathering for the purpose of exchanging bouquets, count me out. I've got work to do."

"My poor father often said that a soft answer turneth away wrath," Wilson said, smiling at Carstairs. "And so I will say to you, dear man—"

"Don't dear me," Carstairs retorted. "Talk like a man."

A swift change came over the half-breed's face.

"I will," he said. "I do not like your attitude, whatever-your-name-is. I expect courtesy. I give it. I have been gentlemanly at what may be said in few words. This: You can have camphor. The Japanese in Taiwan are frightened out of their seven senses—if they have that many. The soldiers at the guard-line—I need not explain that to you, Heald; you know what it is—have been largely withdrawn. Operations have actually ceased. Word came to me of this, to my headquarters in the—to my headquarters. I verified all of it. How, is of no matter. I *know*. My word is sufficient. The monopoly is afraid. They can not get coolies, for one thing. For another, they would rather receive a smaller amount for the camphor than take any further chances. My price Heald knows. It is well worth it. You approach the government. They will accept. I know that, also. How? A word here, a word there. I hurried to you with it. They know nothing as to how everything was done. It was done cleverly. I did it."

"Did what?" Carstairs asked. "I'm sick of riddles."

"Ask Heald," Wilson said. "He knows most of it. It was all explained to him. Even to most details. He was very cautious before entering and protected himself and his company perfectly. He took no chance. I took that. But part at least of the reward is mine. I have done my work."

Heald, Carstairs and the half-breed swung involuntarily toward the Old Man.

"My boys at home advised me to go into it," the latter said. "It is not like our previous business has been conducted. But I'm getting old, I expect. What do you advise, Heald?"

"Do it!"

"And you, Carstairs?"

"Too muddled for me! Give me some details. What was done? How were the Japanese scared? Are we sure of what we're doing? We've nothing to take but the word of a half—"

"Rather say the word of a Eurasian," Wilson said, licking his lips.

Carstairs raised his head high.

"I apologize," he said simply. "But are we to take your word, to pay you, and then find we've been stung? That's happened before."

"Under cover of having sent a man to Formosa, I've checked up on what has occurred," Heald yelped. "What Mr. Wilson says is true. We can get the stuff beyond question, and—"

"They why pay him for it?" Carstairs asked.

"Because Mr. Wilson has made it possible. He came to me with the plan months ago, and I O. K.'ed it. It is a debt of honor, man!"

Heald looked angrily at Carstairs, and the manager gave him glare for glare. Suddenly Carstairs said:

"I think—if it were me—that I would like —some one else's word as well, Heald. I had not intended saying this now. But there must be a lot of money tied up in this deal. I'm supposed to aid the company. While I'm with them I will. And, Heald, if you want to know what I think, I'll say it was a rotten trick to send any one on a fool's errand—and especially a man who'd given a lot of his best years to the company."

Heald yelled—

"Do you say I lie, Carstairs?"

"No. But—you haven't always stuck to the truth, Heald. Let me remind you of what you said to me about the Nagasaki business, and of—"

"We need not discuss this before Mr. Wilson," the Old Man said, alarmed at Carstairs' heat. "You are against this, Will?"

"I am—unless we have some one beside these two to verify it."

Westgaard stood up very slowly.

"Would—you take—my word, Bill?" he asked tonelessly.

Heald thought he saw what Westgaard intended.

"The word of a drunkard!" he appealed to the Old Man.

The half-breed looked about him nonchalantly, satisfied at the eventual outcome.

"Don't say they're right, George," Carstairs pleaded.

"Pretty nearly—right," Westgaard said. "But—very wrong."

"Ah," the half-breed intoned. "He speaks in parables, what? I can recall a saying of my dear father dimly. The exact words I have forgotten." He smiled. "A very pious man, my poor father. I have followed in his footsteps as best I may."

Westgaard thought of the Taiyal girl grimly.

Why didn't something happen? Westgaard realized, from the crack in the door, that the meeting was being spied upon, and that Kagowo had most certainly laid his trap; why, then, was he forced to wait—

It came to him, while the breed looked him over superciliously, that if the Japanese swarmed into the room that he, Westgaard, would never get a fist into those grinning eyes; he wondered for a fleeting instant if he had strength enough—saw the yellow face before him sway back and forth a moment, and then struggled to regain his wits, and to clear the fog which seemed to settle before him. He forced his eyes upward to meet those of the breed. Wilson turned away distastefully, finding the blue-black eyes unpleasant as the stab of a knife.

"It nauseates me to see a drunkard," he said, flicking dust from his sleeve, sensate that the belligerent Carstairs would not like the remark, and seeing no reason why he should placate this man, whom Heald had told him would soon be sent back to the States. "I have assisted so many men on the upward path that I sicken at the sight of a man going down."

"Aye," Westgaard said coldly, although he trembled with excitement. "Many a man you've sent upward."

"I don't know who you are," Wilson told him calmly. "I care less. I do not like your looks. If I were asked, I should say that a bath and a shave, and then a sleep, might do much to make you—er—appear more human."

Why did words still come to Westgaard's mouth? The gaunt white man did not know, and did not want them, but he said harshly—

"It would take more than that to make you human."

"Westgaard is simply following Carstair's lead," Heald announced suavely. "You, sir—" to the Old Man—"have made up your mind. Let us get started. First, Mr. Wilson will come to the bank with me, and we will arrange payment, and then—"

"George hasn't said anything," Carstairs interrupted. "If there's any one who ought to know about this business, it's George. He's been in Formosa, and—"

"Have you?" Wilson asked swiftly. "Then you can verify what I've just said."

"Yes. I can verify it."

As Westgaard said this the half-breed showed neither relief nor excitement; why should he? Westgaard went on:

"What you say is very true. Especially —about assisting men—upward."

For an instant Wilson's eyes became angry slits. Had this drunkard picked up gossip close to the truth at some Kiirun waterfront dive? Yet Wilson was positive that only one white man had any knowledge that might be damaging—and *that* white man was very dead; true, the dead man had carried papers on him, but those papers, Wilson believed, were somewhere up in the hills of Formosa, where a messenger was trying to find him.

Wilson harked back. The coolie who had told him of the dead white man had not been alone; a second had been with him, and both told the same story.

WILSON smiled, but not swiftly enough to obliterate that fleeting look of hatred. What had he to fear from chance conjecture? Nothing in any of the three worlds. The Taiyals looked at him as a god. It had been a long and fantastic story he had told them of the eagle's disappearance, in which he mixed gods and devils in proper proportion. A god who would remove the foreigners, Japanese and white and Chinese alike. He had sung the same song to the Formosans in the cities—or assistants had done it for him.

And so he said nothing now, but spread out his hands in a frank gesture.

Carstairs stood up.

"If Westgaard says it's so, it's so," he said. Then, grimacing: "This business stinks of secrecy and plotting. The company wasn't started that way. Maybe it's big business. I don't know. I'm going out. I don't like the air in here. Finish this matter any way you want, but count

me out. I'm done. Take that any way you want. Come on, George; let's go up to the club."

"No," Westgaard said.

He looked around the room, and finally fixed his aching eyes on a button of Heald's coat. He said to Heald, eyes averted—

"You understood what this man intended doing?"

"Naturally," Heald snapped.

"Thanks," Westgaard said. "I just wanted to make sure."

Through Westgaard's head began to race what he knew, what he had seen. Mumaka, Noriko, Amada. Crow-feathers. Diabolical cawing. He stood so absolutely still, looked so dejected with his hanging head and hands, that Heald grinned broadly, feeling that finally Westgaard knew the part that he, Heald, had taken. Triumph showed in Heald's short laugh as he stepped to the half-caste's side.

Let us get the preliminaries over with," Heald said.

Westgaard held out a wavering hand.

"Please wait," he said gently. "I've got something else—to say."

"There isn't anything left to say," Heald disagreed. "Unless you want to—hmm—sing us a little drunken song or so?"

"You're a dirty swine, Heald," Carstairs put in. "If Westgaard were not so miserably sick, he'd—"

"Talk big, as he always does," Heald retorted.

Carstairs looked at his friend hopefully, but Westgaard did not move. The gaunt man in the kimono was wondering if there was force enough in him to raise his arm, let alone strike with it. His tired senses told him that he must say what he had to say, or never have as fitting opportunity. He put his hand on Heald's sleeve.

"I—I must tell you—"

Heald shook the hand off. As an executive would do—calmly. The Old Man was watching him—and doubtless marking the way he handled the situation. He linked his arm through Wilson's and started for the door.

"Wait!" Westgaard said again, and came toward the two.

Wilson was tiring of this drunken argument that was none at all. He wanted the feel of gold between his fingers. Smiling apologetically toward the Old Man, as if mutely explaining the necessity, he pushed Westgaard with more than needful force, and then, startled, cried—

"The man is crazy!"

The touch of those oily fingers had done it.

Westgaard snapped erect as a steel beam. The rush of blood to his head made the new scar angrily crimson. He remembered that outside the door, in the corridor, were waiting Japanese, and that once the half-breed was out of the room he, Westgaard, might never touch him again. What had been the matter with him, anyhow? Had he been sleep-walking, doing nothing save talk, like an arguing priest?

And then he spoke again, but to the point.

"You ——!" he whispered slowly. "Oh, you dirty ——!"

"I must protect myself," Wilson laughed, although Westgaard had made no move toward him.

With a glance at glowering Carstairs, Wilson smashed Westgaard between the eyes.

There was a stir outside the door, a brief, unheard hiss for silence.

The white man, for all his exhaustion, did not go down. The blow he had taken meant that Wilson was tired of all this palavering. He wanted to get the affair finished. One could never be actually positive what Japanese might do, although he was perfectly safe from them. More, he was the first of the plotters to get away from Taiwan, and the *Chiyo* sailed at noon for Hawaii. Given the gold—

Westgaard shook his head, blinked, and as if the blow had returned his wavering senses to him, laughed, took a step to one side, grunted, "Out of the way, Heald!" and came wavering in.

Wilson's fist took him in the jaw this time.

The Old Man danced around wildly, yelping:

"George, behave yourself! Carstairs, make 'em stop! This is terrible, right in our offices! What do you think this is, George? A drinkin' shop? Heald, do something!"

Heald came obediently, finding Westgaard's back to him, but Carstairs somehow was between him and the others.

"Give me a wallop at that Chino," Carstairs suggested grimly. "I'm no sick man."

"He is—too big for you," Westgaard said. "Keep off, Bill. It's my fight."

"There's gonna be no fight," the Old

Man repeated angrily. "It has got to be stopped."

Stopped it might have been. The door from the hall was an inch open, and eyes surveyed the scene. But had not the orders from Taihoku said plainly that the white man had a score to settle, and that he was to be allowed to collect payment with anything short of death.

The punch had sent Westgaard back on his heels, although he felt no pain. He understood that the half-caste was his own height and more than his weight. Not exhausted, sleepless, hungry. None of those things. But, Westgaard decided, very overconfident. Shaking off Carstairs' imploring hand with, "You don't understand, Bill," he came in slowly, let Wilson's swiftly savage blow miss him by inches, and replied with a punch purposely weak and impotent.

Wilson snickered.

"Now," he said largely, "watch."

He came forward swiftly, but there was nothing to watch. Westgaard was not where the blow was delivered.

The breed tried this again. Again. And then he knew that the other was not so drunk as he appeared. But what of that? Wilson had felt his opponent's strength and knew it for what little it was. He wanted this over with, seeing in it only a fool's attempt to support Carstair's opinion, probably to save himself from being discharged.

"——," he growled. "I'm tired of this."

He rushed forward like a bull-ape.

WESTGAARD tried to avoid the swinging of the great arms but could not, and the two men came together, while the Old Man began to call for assistance and to ask fearfully if every one in the other offices were deaf. Had he looked toward the door he would have seen that the ears there were keen. The Japanese believed that while Kagowo's estimate of the *seiyo-jin's* courage was correct yet his opinion as to the bodily strength was sadly exaggerated.

Carstairs rushed forward to stop the thing, and then saw that Westgaard was not as illy placed as casually appeared. True, Wilson had him in his giant arms, his slanting eyes dilated with ferocious force, but his bearlike hug was not crushing the other like an egg-shell. Westgaard had pinned his arms at the elbows. Westgaard held him so, exerting every particle of his strength in the holding, never certain at which moment weakness would numb his brain and muscles.

He held on, lost track of time and place a split-second, and then gathered his waning energy. His brain directed his muscles. Would they obey him? He put them to the test, biting his teeth into his lips; caught Wilson savagely around the body, gave him the cross-buttock, and, before the half-caste could bring his fist upward, threw him to the floor.

It was all done so rapidly that the eye could hardly determine what had happened. Carstairs yelled, "Good old George!" and the Japanese sucked in their breaths fiercely.

Wilson came to his feet at once. He was shamed and angered beyond all expression. He lurched forward, in his eyes a new, more evil look—a slinking gait from which every trace of Caucasian had disappeared. He was serious at last. Westgaard marked this wearily, wondering if he might call on hidden, unknown reserves again.

With a bleat of rage the half-caste charged him, smashing his great right for Westgaard's face, but the white man sidestepped none too rapidly, and the blow missed—and Westgaard shifted and brought his left, full-weight, crash on the half-breed s mouth. It was done instinctively, undirected.

At that triumphant blow there was a dazzling blood-gleam, and the Japanese whimpered with joy.

Both Carstairs and the Old Man understood at last that something was going on that was more vital than they could guess, and had become very quiet, despite Heald's querulous whines to stop this awful business.

"In our office!" he wailed. "To our guest and—"

"My office," the Old Man snapped. "Shut up, Heald."

In a wild whirlwind of fury Wilson hurled himself on Westgaard, his arms going like pistons. Any one of the blows, delivered in a vital spot, would have meant death. Automatically, half unseeing of the blows, the white man ducked, blocked, sidestepped, foiling the other—unwittingly—at every turn, wondering how long it would last before Wilson's arms wound around him.

The half-breed shortened his punches and came closer under cover of them;

desperately Westgaard struck out, and took Wilson with his left in the pit of the stomach, bringing forth a sound that cracked throughout the room.

"For Noriko!" Westgaard gasped, but Carstairs' pleased yell kept the words from all but Wilson, who, that moment, realized that this man knew too much, for, in the raid, he himself had discovered the names of the murdered Japanese officers.

The exertion seemed actually to give Westgaard wild strength; he dared not consider how long it would last, nor at what moment he would go to the floor from his own weakness.

Wilson rushed him again and again, pursuing the other with a savage determination, resolved that he would not need the knife he carried, but that one good body-blow would end the fight. He did not want to use the knife. It would be poor policy. Wilson's face, nevertheless, was strained and anxious, and he waited with menacing eyes to get in the smash that meant the end. The white man's shortening breath, his staring eyes, all told Wilson that this could not last.

Westgaard, also, realized that he could not last long. It was the continuation of the fight more than anything else that would wear him completely out. He had stood up so far and fought. Good! He would try now to force the fighting, putting all of his hope on one wild swing.

As they came together he drove into Wilson's stomach and then brought his right to the other's chin; Wilson swung in return and barely missed Westgaard's jaw. As the breed backed away for a fresh rush Westgaard jumped after him, sending blow after blow to the half-caste's face—a furious mix-up, a whirling torrent of blows, brutal and murderous.

The Japanese could stand it no longer. They shoved into the room, although none of the others saw them.

In the last flurry Wilson's face had become a bloody and battered mask out of which the eyes gleamed hatred. He charged, got Westgaard, bore him to the floor, but could not hold him.

The white man inexplicably squirmed away, how, he did not know. He came to his feet first, and laughed. No one of the watchers knew what that laugh cost. It seemed to Westgaard that the last breath was gone when he let the sound through his lips, and yet he could not avoid doing it.

He saw that the half-caste had come from the floor with a knife in his hand.

THE knife flashed only once; Westgaard smashed at the hand holding it with his fist, was slashed in the forearm, brought his other hand over and whirled the knife to the floor. He was insensible to pain; for all he knew he might still have been in the Formosan hills. He tore after his man insanely, and for the first time Wilson's eyes shifted an instant. What he saw at the door reassured him none, and, after his look, the Japanese ringed closer, panting in unison with Westgaard.

Westgaard was making the last rush he could ever make. The last flash of reason told him that he was weak to the point of crying.

The two men were on the ground, Westgaard's long arms working madly, Wilson using every portion of his tremendous strength, but—the half-caste whimpered internally—of what use was muscle against a man berserk? Westgaard shifted his grip, half lifted Wilson from the floor, foamed at the lips and then cawed like a crow. Wilson screamed, "Take him off, Heald!" and then Westgaard had him off the floor—to return to it a moment later, and, after that, lie very still.

"Oh!" Westgaard said queerly, and sat in an incongruous heap.

The room danced before his eyes, the advancing Japanese soldiers seemed as prisms of colored light—red, orange, yellow. He heard Heald—a long way off, say, "Arrest him, you men," and the officer retort that if any white man were arrested to be careful lest he be the first.

Then the yellow became a sprinkle of stars against a black sky—and then there was nothing save blackness.

What Carstairs was pouring down his throat burned him. He choked, and at length sat up.

Questions were volleyed at him by the Old Man and Carstairs. What was it all about? What'd he—and the government—have against the half-breed? And why'd the officer say Heald was under arrest, unless he took the first steamer home? What'd Heald been doing? What'd the Chino been doing? What'd Westgaard been doing?

"Say something, George!" the Old Man pleaded.

Westgaard, Carstairs' arm about him, swayed painfully to his feet.

"You—going home?" he asked Heald feebly.

Heald did not reply, but turned to his chief.

"I did everything for the best," he mumbled. "Good business. Something leaked out. All legitimate." Insistently, "What Wilson did was none of my affair. He was paid to produce what we wanted. And that—"

"You going home?" Westgaard asked again.

"You bet he's goin' home," the Old Man snorted. "—— if I know exactly why—not until you spit what you know, an' what the government's got on him. But he's goin', anyhow. The company ain't—"

"So," Westgaard said slowly. "Then he can take this—" bringing his bloody hand to Heald's cheek and wiping it across—"he can take this with him."

Heald slunk away from the gaunt and haggard Westgaard.

"Yellow," Westgaard muttered.

"You bet," Carstairs agreed. "Yellower than the yellow man."

The yellow man himself was opening his eyes. He needed no word explained to him, for three of the little soldiers were sitting on his middle, and his arms and legs were already bound.

Wilson tried once.

"It was an unprovoked assault," he said, as firmly as three men on his belly would permit. "These gentlemen here will attest to that."

"Unprovoked," the officer said crisply. "But most of the witnesses will come from Formosa, I believe."

Wilson's face became grayish yellow, like sun through fog.

The officer showed his teeth politely.

"If you were in your own land, *Shina-jin,* I think the death of the thousand cuts would be given you, after which the crows would have what was left. *Mah!* And all we can do is hang you. Lift him up, and carry him bound as he is. We take no chance."

He bowed to Westgaard.

"I will wire Kagowo what has happened, and he will say special prayers for his wife's brother, and for your servant. Kagowo will thank you for this." Very pleasantly, he added: "Will you come and see him hanged, Westgaard-san?"

"No!" Westgaard exploded.

"At least you will come and sign your name to papers already prepared for you, please. *Go mendo nagara.* I am sorry to trouble you, but—"

"No more," Westgaard said. "I can't. I've had enough."

"*Hai!* You do not understand. It is about the camphor. Is not the district safe now, due to you?"

"Oh," Westgaard muttered.

He seemed so totally uninterested that the officer wondered again at the ways of the *seiyo-jin,* who could hear of great fortune and still be calm. Westgaard added, trying to smile—

"I'll come—later."

Carstairs ran an arm about Westgaard's shoulders. He had a hundred questions to ask, but said, instead:

"I guess maybe you're kind of tired, George. Come along, old man."

"All right," Westgaard said tonelessly. "Yes. I'm pretty tired."

It came to him, as he walked with Carstairs and the Old Man on either side, that he was tired, more tired than he could ever express. As the three stepped into the long corridor, separating private offices from the general one, the way was barred. Men of the Company from the far provinces, district men, office workers, even the sweepers from the godown, filled it from side to side.

Westgaard's eyes closed; they watched him, he felt, from curiosity:

"Westgaard! Westgaard! Old George! Westgaard!"

More than curiosity in that! The sudden realization came over him that he had actually accomplished his major purpose. The cost was above accounting—Mumaka, the Japanese of the *aiyu-sen;* yet, if he had not disrupted the sun crows, the total would have been greater and more widespread.

The high nasal voice of the Japanese officer shrilled to the Japanese among the staff:

"*Shita ni iro!* Squat down! A man passes!"

Westgaard's tired eyes lighted. He thought to himself, "It's good to be a man." He was too weary and exhausted to figure things out, but to Carstairs he said, "It's—good—to be—home again."

BATTERSBY'S CODE

by Royce Brier

Author of "White Challenge," "Driven," etc.

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZ., Oct. 15—Jonathan Copple, 56, leaped to his death in the Grand Cañon today. Failure after forty years of artistic endeavor was assigned, in a note left, as the cause of his act.

THIS brief dispatch of two years ago, even had he seen it, would have meant nothing to Battersby.

It is probable that Battersby is still in Raindrop, that he still believes there is nothing like a bowl of roses or a forest fire as an artistic subject, that he still is combing the Petrified Forest of Arizona for a fragment of the quartz containing a tiny pine tree image of perfect symmetry. It is probable, too, that Mrs. Battersby is still echoing the public cry against her spouse as the most unexampled of worthless husbands west of the Mississippi River, if not on the continent.

It was five years ago that Battersby lay drowning in the brown Arizona shadows behind his shack, a structure as far removed from Mrs. Battersby's railroad boarding house as could well be, and remain on Mrs. Battersby's lots. Battersby was a happy man. He had found another promising chunk of fossil wood, and the first cutting had sent his hopes high. He had also that day come by an unexpected gallon of moonshine whisky, and he had not accepted this gift of the gods as solely a hollow formality.

So he sprawled over a bench; a gangling man, looking as a giraffe must look, could it be persuaded to sit in a chair. His garb was a shiny black suit, a calico shirt with dark horizontal stripes, and a lavender tie in a knot that had never ascended more than six inches from the hollow of his turkey-red neck. He had a red mustache—as much of it as one could see protruding from beneath his hat—and his eyes, were they visible, would be kind eyes, and what may be termed faded-overall blue.

In his golden dreaming there was a discordant note, hammering dimly at his subconscious thought. It was the bell in his shack. He had himself installed this bell ten years before, and had spent ten years regretting the weak moment. Sometimes Mrs. Battersby did not follow up the bell with a personal appearance. Sometimes she did.

She shook Battersby by the shoulder, and stood with arms akimbo, regarding him with a minatory eye and tapping one large and capable foot in the yellow dust. Battersby aroused himself.

"Yes, dear," he mumbled. He had a gentle, rather high-keyed voice for a man of his bulk.

" 'Yes, dear,' " parroted his two-hundred-pound wife, and again, " 'Yes, dear.' " It was preparatory to the running broad jump in castigation, at which Mrs. Battersby was champion in those parts. Mrs. Battersby was trying for a record:

"Well, you in business, or not? Answer me that! You lay great store by bein' a guide around the desert, an' you lay great store by collectin' junk an' selling to the dudes, an'—"

"Yes, dear," interrupted Battersby, sitting up and blinking.

But he saw the granite lines about the mouth of his better nine-tenths.

"Battersby's Code," copyright, 1926, by Royce Brier.

"Don't 'yes, dear' me no more! Listen to me! A gentlemin is waitin' for you, an' wearin' out his welcome in my house, Ed Battersby, for to take 'im out in the desert to paint pitchers, an' maybe a three day trip for you, an' you back here in your cups an' foolin' 'th your old junk, an' I s'pose you'll be in an' want to borrow five dollars t'morrow, an' I should've sent the gentlemin north of the tracks to Barney Sinton to guide, an' it's a shame to send you in to the gentlemin smellin' like a old bar, an' pro'bition just passed all over the U. S., an' I swear if I ain't the worst abused woman in Arizony, an' the whole town talkin' 'bout you for twenty year, an' why I ever b'lieved you in Fort Wayne that they was gold out here, an' not any woman before, I swear, ever put up 'th such a rag-tag, lazy, good fer nothin'—"

Mrs. Battersby gulped.

"Now, you march!" she barked.

Battersby marched. In the front sitting-room of the boarding house he found a gray-haired man with a thin, sensitive face, and steel-blue eyes curtained with a vague but inescapable look of melancholy.

"How 'do," said Battersby, far more cordially than that contraction is customarily spoken.

"I understand you are a guide?" said the man in a quiet, almost humming, voice.

"Uh-huh. I know everywhere on the desert here," replied Battersby, quite liking that voice.

"And your charges?"

"Three dollars a day an' found."

"I am an artist," said the man, and Battersby, the indolent minded, recalled that Mrs. Battersby had so defined him.

He observed the velour hat, a strange note in this rough land, and the man's long, soft fingers, and three square cases of varying size reposing beside his chair.

"I wish to do some landscapes of the Painted Desert," the man continued in his softly modulated voice. "It is a region rich in color, I am told. Swinnerton has done well by it. You can guide me?"

"Uh-huh," said Battersby. "Sure, I can guide you. I'll show you 'round to some 's pretty colors, an' bright as you ever see. 'Course, you might be dis'ppointed, as it's kind of barren-like an' ain't much to paint. Me, I like a good bowl of roses for something pretty to paint, or a good forest fire. I seen a forest fire onc't when I was a kid in Michigan that was some fire, if I do say it, an' next day a sign painter that painted wagons, he painted the forest fire from memory, an' about as fine as anything you ever see. I got it out in my shack. You unnerstan' those things, an' maybe you'd buy it, though 'course I hold it pretty dear."

"I will see it," said the man gravely. "And, by the way, my name is Copple, though you may call me Jack. My friends do."

It was characteristic with Battersby that the man's last name declined to stay by him. "Jack" stayed by him without effort. Battersby was always at great effort to avoid effort.

LIKE the forest fire and the bowl of roses, the Painted Desert paintings, by a pensioned Santa Fé brakeman, were atrocious.

"Y'see, it ain't much good for painting," Battersby told the artist, setting the collection out in the morning sunlight.

Copple's pain was almost physical as he surveyed the crude work, but he lied bravely. There was something in Copple besides selfish genius, and there was something in the questioning look of Battersby's pale eyes that seized the artist's soul. He said, as they drove out the Keams Cañon trail:

"Supposing we go out for five or more days, and I pay you five dollars a day? I believe this trip will be profitable to me."

"Well, now, tha's pretty nice of you, Jack," said Battersby. "I tell ya, I gotta go up toward Cañon del Muerto this fall to get some more turquoise for my cli'nts. The colors up there 're good, an' pretty. It's 'bout a week run. Leave our cars at Keams Cañon an' pack in. What say?"

"Splendid!" said the other, and the sudden bouyancy of the word surprized Battersby, so inured was he already to solemnity in his companion.

They passed Pilot Rock, lonely monument in a sea of sand, went on to Castle Butte, with Twin Butte in the distance. Crimson and violet and pale green shifted and shimmered in the changing slant of the sunlight.

They ate luncheon and went on. This was before the latter-day tourist had littered the desert with discarded tires while bound to the Hopi Indian villages, and the

beaten track was not so thoroughly beaten. They consumed an entire day reaching Keams Cañon, where they camped outside the trading store.

"Superb, this country," said Copple, lying in the rose glow of a buckthorn fire and staring at the close, personal stars.

"Yeah, it's a pretty country," said Battersby, "but not so pretty for painting as 'round Fort Wayne, Indiana. You take, there's a pretty country. You take a cornfield, they's nothin' prettier'n a corn field if a good warm summer's come 'long, an' the growth good. I found some corn in one of the graves onc't."

"The graves?"

"Yeah. Y'see, I'm a grave-robber," explained the guide. "Leastwise, the Navajos say so."

"I don't understand," murmured the artist.

"Well, y'see how it is, Jack, it's this way: Me an' Mrs. Battersby, we ain't just got the same ideas about what I should ought to do. I'm thirty-eight an' old 'nough to go to work, she figgers. 'Bout twenty years I been showin' people like you around the desert, an' pickin' up curiosities an' sellin' them to institooshuns in the East for a sideline. You take some the old cliff-dwellers up around del Muerto, well, they's lots of graves there a thousan' years old—mummies. Well, I dig 'em up an' ship 'em, an' quite often I find turquoise things, which is wanted real bad. 'Course, I don't make no fortune all in one whoop, but then I might some day with some extra fancy special rare spec'men."

"And the Indians call you a grave robber? —These are tombs of extinct races?"

"Abs'lutely. Why, Jack, they's so old, it's just like a 'Gyptian mummy. The Navajos they think I'm huntin' gold, thassall, an' they take a shot at me sometimes.

"Well, you take it, I don't make much; just 'nough to kind of fill in on my guidin', an' of course, bein' a guide you have days when you lay around a good deal, an' so Mrs. Battersby, she kind of thinks—well, it kind of gets on her nerves, me layin' around, the way it gets on a lot of people's nerves, whose business it ain't any of theirs, if you lay around. What I mean is, Mrs. Battersby figgers I ain't no good 'cause I won't go wrestlin' a brakeman's lantern on the railroad, or rustle around and set up a gas station to get these auto tourists which are beginning to come in so plentiful you'd be surprized.

"'Course, you holler long 'nough an' ever'body believes you. I ain't complainin'. Proberly Raindrop an' Mrs. Battersby is right, 'cause, well, I guess I ain't got many princ'ples, Jack, or many morals, an won't work, an' booze some, an'—"

"What principles have you in your code, Battersby?" asked Copple curiously, rolling over and regarding the other's face, murky coral from the glow of the dying embers.

"Why—" Battersby faltered, surprized by the question, "—why, I guess not none 'less you might say just to allus do my best by them that hires me to guide 'em."

A PACK train of two Indian ponies and three burros wound from Keams Cañon. Hopi horsemen, keen eyes discerning the white man, galloped a mile for the brand of cigarets for which collegiate-appearing chaps are said willingly to walk the same distance.

"Nice people," said Battersby to the artist, as their ponies plodded abreast. "Allus laughing, the Hopis. Back on the Navajo reservation this afternoon. Navajos ain't such laughers. Can be good an' ornery. They'll kill a rattler, a unharmful animal like that."

"What do you do if you are attacked?"

"Me? Aw, I gen'ally make a run for it. I ain't scared of 'em, 'cause I come right back an' take another chanc't, but just don't want to have to kill a Indian. They think they're right. Tha'sa way I look at trouble—if the other one figgers he's right, what for to get mad at him, huh?"

That coaxed a ghost of a smile from the artist.

"I believe that would cut down the sum total of hatred," he conceded. "Don't you ever complain to the Indian agents?"

"Naw, he'd just laugh at me. Say my hide was made for a sieve. Mebbe he'd be right. 'F I was the president or the governor it would be all right I should watch my hide. But just showin' people around the desert, you don't have to watch your hide so close, do you?"

Copple laughed outright, the first audible merriment Battersby had heard from him in two days' acquaintance.

"You have an inferiority complex," said the artist.

"Huh? Yeah, I guess mebbe."

He puzzled over that for ten seconds and gave it up. A mental tussle had no place in Battersby's code.

They entered the Navajo reservation late that afternoon, and as the guide had predicted, the welcoming smiles were gone. They encountered a young native horseman, rabbit-skin cap, checkered calico shirt, threadbare corduroys, moth-eaten mount. Battersby conversed with him vociferously for a few minutes.

"That's Tampeyo, a breed," explained the guide, as he and Copple rode on. "Says Tommy Moquiva and his braves 're gangin' up around *Pitsehytso* Butte with ten barrels of grain alcohol they swiped near Gallup, an' we better go *To atin* Mesa an' stay outta *Su se tah he* Wash."

"He's a villainous-looking chap," commented Copple.

"Yeah, he ain't no orchid for looks, nor no gardenia for smell, with me, neither. I had a little shootin' scrape up here last Febwary, an' I figger mebbe Tampeyo does the double-X caper. He's a slicker at handin' out friendly tips. Say, I never asted you—you mind gettin' into a little argument with the braves, mebbe? If you do we'll turn back an' I can come up next month."

"Nothing of the kind," said Copple promptly. "Indeed, I rather welcome it. Where could one find a more imposing tomb than this about us! Think of spending the everlasting amid such splendor. Napoleon, under the dome of the Invalides, rests in a potter's field compared to this."

Battersby shot his ward a swift glance.

"Gawsh, you got a kind of a sad gift of gab," he said.

They crept over *Sa la kai* Mesa, endless as the smooth folds of a green beam sea. They passed *chinty hogans*, Navajo dwellings made death-houses by pestilence, and never after occupied. They slipped into a little cañon of tumbled yellow rocks, to a spring.

"This is fine—fine," said Copple. "I would do a sunset sketch here."

But Battersby was cursing his burro.

"Drink, you —— critter!—" he paused abruptly, glancing about and cocking an eye at the rim of the cañon above. He reached down and scooped some of the water to his lips, and made a wry face.

"We're goin' on," he said.

"But—"

"Yup, gotta," continued the guide firmly. "The spring's poisoned. Tampeyo, Moquiva, mebbe, huh? I don' know. Might be a war on 'tween Moquiva an' the Monument Valley braves, but hardly think so—c'mon."

Copple protesting vainly, they ascended from the cañon and crept over another mesa through piñon groves grown gloomy in the old afternoon.

"Unnerstand, the Navajos ain't killers, leastwise most of 'em ain't. Take us now, you can't tell a Navajo we ain't after gold. You can't hardly blame 'em. Tha's the only thing they ever seen a white man hot after.

"Well, us now, they could rub us out, but then there would be a lot of —— raised by the Guv'ment. But if we was found croaked by a spring which had a lot of poison herb juice poured in, an' which would run out long 'fore we'd be found, why no trouble. Savvy? Them Navajos won't shoot when they're mad, though they might shoot if they was —— mad. Savvy?"

Copple nodded.

"We got 'em cheated today," Battersby chuckled. "They's a *chinty hogan* up here half a mile, an' a spring behind it, an' you never got a Navajo closer to a *chinty hogan* than a hundurd yards, 'less he was a dead Navajo."

They found the *hogan* of evil repute, and the spring of undefiled water. At daylight Battersby found the artist sketching the *hogan*, but when he would look over Copple's shoulder he was callously rebuffed. Not until the artist was finished did he ease Battersby's hurt.

"Let us be frank, companions out this way," said Copple, melting. "You say the man who did your Painted Desert pictures did not object to your looking over his shoulder during composition. I don't want to hurt you, but your pictures are worthless as art. You must believe me, for I have toiled at this for thirty-five years. My own work, the critics say, is only poster design."

Battersby chanced to look up, and was dumfounded at the look of desolation suddenly lying in the eyes of Copple. His own pain was lost in a poignant if inexplicable sympathy for his companion.

"Aw, 'scuse me, Mr.—Mr. Jack," he said. "I want you to have a good time up here,

an' to not be dis'ppointed. I guess tha's mebbe what I like best of anything—to have them I guide sort of believe in my guidin'—sort of—"

THROUGH Cañon del Muerto—Cañon of Death—with its sheer red walls topped by a lucid blue sky, into another cañon and into another, went the artist and his guide.

Here is a region rich in the lore of the past. Before the boy Columbus dreamed of a new path to India, ancient red men dwelt in these cliffs, scratched their pictographs, loved, fought and died. Dying, they left behind them those who bid them godspeed into the misty future, burying them with bowls of food that they might not hunger, with weapons that they might defend themselves, with simple trinkets they had cherished before the long sleep came upon them. Invasions, counter-invasions, petty grave pilfering and systematic robbery, and hovering over it all the ceaseless disintegration of time—this is the dim and fragmentary story of the remote ages in the Southwest.

The travelers camped by a trickling stream on the flat ribbon of a floor. Copple could scarcely contain himself. He stood like a man in a daze, gazing at black-red walls rising a thousand feet above him, at phantom colossi standing out from smooth cliffs, at distant minarets painted ruddy gold by the descending sun.

"It ain't much," said Battersby. "Kind of barren, like I said. But there's some swell caves with some good mummies in 'em. I got one cave special that none of the sci'ntific expeditions has got wise to a few miles up this cañon. Some day mebbe I'll get something extra fancy special around these parts, an' mebbe sell it so good I can retire from guidin' an' find a perfec' pine tree in petrified wood."

At dawn, Copple was up, sketching. That week Battersby roamed the cañon, fetching to camp heaps of ancient, dusty stuff taken from the cavern tombs. In the firelight one evening Copple, in three minutes, sketched with charcoal a ghastly likeness of one of Battersby's prized mummies. Battersby decided his companion was a great artist in charcoal. His oil work, well under way in eight or ten small canvases, Battersby did not care for, therewith in accord with the erudite critics.

One late afternoon there was a thunderstorm. Copple went mad at the ink blue of the furious clouds, the luminous gold of the sunlight beyond the storm, the lustrous silver of the slanting rain. He went mad, and he painted like mad.

For five days he copied "Cañon Storm." The afternoon of the fifth day he slept. He had hardly dozed off when Battersby galloped into camp wild with excitement. He danced about with crooning curses.

"Glory be!" he cried. "—— and glory be! ——'s bells and a sidewinder's eye! Rich, by ——! Dirty rich!"

The cause of this rococo nonsense was contained in a small square of gunnysack. Battersby kneeled Moslem fashion and spread it out, and there lay, radiant in the afternoon sun, a turquoise necklace of exquisite beauty. It gleamed with a fire almost its own. Through the powder of ancient bones tiny rose flecks shimmered from depths of blue like Arizona morning sky.

Though Battersby did not know it, and, indeed, was never to know it, this string consisted of over two thousand beads, each worked individually by rubbing small discs of matrix across sandstone tablets, and each drilled for the sinew cord with some sharpened flint, perhaps, held in the tireless hands of some lapidary dead a thousand years.

"Five thousand—ten thousand bucks!" gasped Battersby, running his fingers along the marvelously matched and graduated beads.

COPPLE did not paint feverishly after the storm. He did eight or ten more canvases, mostly of the desert floor above the valley, and of varying size. He now had a score of canvases in various stages toward completion. Battersby was secretly disappointed in most of them. They did not contain the corner-gas-station brilliance of paint of his own paintings back in Raindrop. Battersby did not see much in gray violet of buttes at evening, or in wind-blown piñons of black-green. He did not consider any conifer, unless it were ablaze, a fit subject for reproduction on canvas. He liked "Cañon Storm" chiefly for its size.

"By Godfrey, it looks like rain, awright!" was his comment.

While Copple's interest in the great necklace find was confined to the iridescence in the turquoise.

"It gives rhythm to the surface," he said.

So passed the days until Tampeyo rode into camp. With him was his half-brother, Ne-ah-tee. Copple was gone for a final sketch before camp was broken, and Battersby was surprized by the Navajo horsemen at the stream, fully a hundred yards from camp and his precious turquoise necklace. He was instantly suspicious of them, for their faces were dark with more than Navajo blood and more than Nordic whisky.

"What are you doing here. I told you it was not good to come here. You broke faith."

These were Tampeyo's words in his own tongue. In the same tongue, Battersby replied:

"I never break faith. I gave you no word. I am guiding a gentleman, a magic picture-maker, who wanted to come. I travel where I please."

Ne-ah-tee started forward menacingly, but his half-brother stayed him with a grunt.

"You are a fool," growled Tampeyo. "You are after gold. My people do not like it."

"I am not after gold. I thought you were my friend, Tampeyo."

"You are a liar."

"Aw, shut your mug," grinned Battersby, in English.

Apparently Tampeyo and Ne-ah-tee both understood this for a contemptuous admonishment, for they grew angry and shouted curses across the tiny stream. Battersby's grin left him.

"We are going," he said in Navajo, "leaving tomorrow. I will not bother you more, Tampeyo. You are not my friend."

The glowering Indians whirled and were off, their exit as swift as their entrance, and more mysterious. Battersby pondered, washing his hands in the stream.

He arose. Probably had he made straight for the camp he would have stayed hostilities for a time. Instead he skirted some low brush and started downstream, where he had some clothes drying. He had taken but a few steps when a bullet splashed the water near him.

He dropped into the brush, peering this way and that. He could not see the Indians he had just encountered, but on a distant rotten sandstone slide at the foot of the far cliff he espied two riders. One he knew for Moquiva; the other was strange.

Battersby could not guess whether or not the shot was intended for a warning only. He had to test that by thrusting his arm above the brush. In a twinkling a bullet whipped the brush. Moquiva, possibly not even awaiting signal from Tampeyo, the treacherous friend, was angry enough for murder.

The horsemen were unwontedly careless, exposing themselves thus. Battersby took careful aim at Moquiva with his revolver. When he fired, the Indian toppled from his mount.

It was a miraculous shot for small arms. Even though in Battersby's hand a thirty-eight was as a brush in the hand of Copple, Battersby's shots would have to be miraculous, pitted against Navajo marksmanship.

Battersby, gentleman that he was, grew sick with the thought he had possibly taken the life of a fellow man. Yet he had no time to lose. The other rider had vanished. A flanking movement and a deadly battle—supposing the artist should come upon that.

Battersby leaped from the brush, running low in a zigzag course, but there were no further bullets until he had almost reached camp, when one creased his leg in a superficial flesh wound. He scooped up a rifle and a box of shells, shouting at the burros and ponies to scatter them, and plunging into some near-by brush.

Battersby was cool. He knew he would be ambushed now. He knew he had little chance, even though he faced but the three remaining Indians. His brain, usually indolent, clicked madly with thought of the artist, his charge. Could he reach civilization if Battersby died? It was extremely doubtful. He was not versed in desert ways. Even if there was no gathering of the natives to avenge their brothers, the artist would starve, would die of thirst.

Yet the ultimate decision had come. It was victory or death, and nothing else. It seemed strange to him, even in that moment of unsolved destiny, that Battersby, the mild fellow who would like to find a perfect pine tree in chalcedony, should face this conflict.

A bullet with a dull *pgggggg* plowed through a coffee can standing upright on a blanket.

BATTERSBY loaded. From his hiding place he gazed at his knapsack, twenty-five feet away in the camp clearing. It contained the turquoise necklace. At an equal distance, but lying more toward the river, stood the cases containing the artist's paintings. As the vague thought of these two objects pounded in his thought, three riders appeared as swiftly as the flash of dragon-flies from a clump of piñons—but one never returned. Battersby had fired, and Ne-ah-tee had gone down.

He waited, tense as a hunted mink. How could one man overcome four! Yet two were down. Such things had occurred bebefore, victory when all seemed hopeless. Blood beat in Battersby's temples as he lay panting with the afternoon heat in the dusty brush. But Battersby was cool within.

There was the artist, poor ——, alone and doomed if Battersby failed. What would they say in Raindrop? Battersby had never cared before. That large, disagreeable woman, Mrs. Battersby, swam about in his brain for a while. He stirred slightly. A shower of sand flew into his eyes, kicked there by winging lead.

"God, keep that artist, Jack, 'way for just a few minutes," Battersby prayed.

He moved the brush, this time intentionally. A bullet spattered on a rock, but this time there was a puff of smoke from near the piñon thicket, and a bullet went back, and three more for good measure. Something thudded, whether horse or man, Battersby could not determine.

He looked again at the knapsack, again at the artist's cases. If he could but get the necklace and Jack and get out. The paintings could be done again, but that necklace, for which he had searched for twenty years —there was no duplicate of that in all the world. He was tormented with a phantom thought that fluttered through his mind independently of his tense watchfulness. He wondered vaguely if the paintings could be done again.

That thought flashed to the surface and took on substance as the brush across the clearing moved. Something was creeping there with infinite caution. Battersby waited. The brush moved again. Battersby fired. Chaos broke loose.

A sting like the thrust of a sharp stick came in his shoulder. The sting vanished and a slight dizziness came to Battersby. He shook his head, and the dizziness seemed to go. He shifted his rifle and waited.

From the brush across the clearing Tampeyo started up, all of his ancestral savagery on his dark countenance. Yes, it was booze, that stolen grain alcohol. No four Indians were ever so unwary before. Battersby sighted carefully to avoid pulling his shot, and pulled the trigger. There was no report. The rifle was empty. To re-load was to bring a hail of death from Tampeyo, who held a revolver in one hand and crawled unsteadily toward the knapsack.

What did Battersby care for death! Tampeyo held the priceless necklace in his hand now, grunting and taking his time, evidently convinced that Battersby was dead.

With growing frequency Battersby had to shake his head to banish the dizziness. With anguish on his twisted lips he beheld the Indian thrust the necklace into his shirt pocket. Battersby tried to arise, to make one last fight for the trinket that the wildest chance of the years had placed in his hands. But the will to arise could not overcome his ebbing power. His hands trembled, clutching at the brush. He tried to cry out. A dry sob shook his prone frame.

Tampeyo kicked at the knapsack in disgust, and turned and crawled toward the case containing the Copple paintings. As unconscious of scrutiny as a cub-bear in a cage, the Indian withdrew one of the canvases from the case, and grunted in more disgust. Then, as in sudden anger, he smashed a fist through it.

That was what Tampeyo thought of Battersby's magic picture-maker.

A dull explosion seemed to take place within Battersby. Its mighty energy seemed to travel to the tips of his fingers and toes; it forced a cry from lips that had been silent at the rape of the necklace.

Battersby arose. Like a dead man falling, he lunged at Tampeyo, his rifle a spear. He toppled the dumfounded Indian into the dust, sent him rolling over and over.

Battersby beat the air with his arms, screaming curses, as frenzied as an animal in death throe. Then he abruptly collapsed over the art cases, his arms outspread and his body shaken by decreasing sobs.

He did not know at that instant that Copple ran into the clearing, poor Copple, fumbling awkwardly at a revolver. Nor that Tampeyo had seen Copple first, and had decided that two white demons were too many, his three companions having been killed by Battersby.

Half an hour later Battersby mumbled—

"Gallup—Gallup, N'Mex'co—only eighty miles."

HOW a dude transported a delirious man eighty miles through cañons and over mesas and across a trackless desert, was a seven-day wonder to Gallup, New Mexico, as it was a two-day wonder to Jonathan Copple.

Just before Battersby went under the ether, a kindly questioner such as is found in the stress of every affair of this kind, asked:

"You say the swell necklace was took by the Injun? Why didn't you save that, instead of a bunch of old oil paintings for the dude?"

"Why—" muttered Battersby, the fumes of ether for an instant banishing delirium, "why, I was his guide—y'see—I was—was—'s gui—"

The ether bore him away to silence and darkness.

Battersby recovered. Copple gave him the picture "Cañon Storm." He liked it. He used often to display it to friends.

"Ain't that rain swell!" he would say. "A fella name' Jack I took out in the desert onc't that time I got shot—he painted it. I got some prettier ones here—more brighter—an' a swell forest fire pitcher—take a look at this forest fire onc't!"

From the art page of a recent Sunday edition of a San Francisco newspaper:

> What did Jonathan Copple, whose tragic life ended two years ago before the overpowering beauty of the Grand Cañon, mean when in his bitter farewell note he wrote: "but if a stupid world ever beholds beauty in my work, there is one, the masterpiece of all my landscapes, that I hope will remain unknown, to plague those who shut their eyes to me while I lived."
>
> This is the question being asked by critics here and throughout the world as they witness the sky-rocketing values of Copple's works. Where was the masterpiece painted, and what was its subject? Where did the artist bury it, so confident it would remain buried. Indeed, Jonathan Copple has proved a true prophet, and there is little doubt, that picture today would bring fifty thousand dollars.
>
> Three of his smaller works sold for $22,000 in an art gallery here last week.

It is just as well Battersby is ignorant of all of this; for were he not, he might not be a good guide.

THE OLD VARMINT

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "Hardwood," "Gray," etc.

THE snow was not very deep on the level. In the elevated, isolated bowl which the Shawngunk hillmen called The Traps, however, there are few levels; the ground is either slanting or vertical; and upon such a terrain snow has a way of striving to make a level of its own, thus creating difficulties for the wanderer off the beaten track. It was not strange, therefore, that Job Briggs, while endeavoring to work to leeward of a wary deer, suddenly found himself asprawl and his game gone.

Perhaps it had served him right, for legally he was altogether unjustified in stalking that buck. The open season had terminated weeks ago. Game laws are created, however, by townsmen, who can buy fresh meat at any butcher's shop. Mountain folk, who have never been consulted regarding the making of such laws, who have no meat stores at hand, and who find a diet of salt pork somewhat monotonous, are likely to have different ideas. And when a fellow owns a good repeating rifle and is morally certain that a backload of rich red venison may be obtained by proceeding to a certain spot and firing a bullet or two, he may, perhaps, be pardoned for loading his gun and taking a quiet walk. At any rate, Job had done so. And, but for that masked hollow under the snow and the *crackle* with which he fell into a brittle bush he would have toted home a welcome addition to the larder.

Struggling to his feet, the hillman now listened wrathfully to the rattle of stiff saplings against swiftly receding antlers. The buck had been just where the hunter had suspected—standing in the dense brush rimming an abandoned orchard. Now, still unseen, he was hurling himself away from there. Job muttered something and bent to yank his gun from the drift. Then, still astoop, he tensed.

Some distance away had sounded a muffled crash of breaking brush. Followed a vague scrambling noise, succeeded by silence.

"*Huh-huh-huh!*" chucked the huntsman. "Stubbed yer own toe, did ye, mister buck? That makes it evens. An' I'm a-comin' after ye!"

With a smart rap of his gun-barrel to dislodge any snow-plug from the muzzle he plowed forward. Within the brush curtain he found the tracks, leading away by long leaps; and along this spoor he drove in battering-ram fashion, boring through the tangle with head down. Soon he reached timber, less brushy. Through this he loped, floundering at times, but seldom more than ankle deep. At length, breathing hard, he halted.

"Umph!" he grunted. "Gone ag'in."

The buck had fallen; that was plain. A slant stone under the snow had spilled him headlong, and half a rod of smashed undergrowth and littered snow testified to the force of his impact. It was equally plain, however, that he had arisen promptly and continued flight; but not at the same break-neck pace. Scanning the trail beyond, Job nodded and resumed pursuit.

"*The Old Varmint*," *copyright, 1926, by Arthur O. Friel.*

For half a mile the track wound along a rather wobbly course, as if the deer were dazed or sick. Then it turned short, leading toward the precipitous plateau of Dickie Barre. The trailer's eyes glowed. Fool critter! If he'd penned himself up under those ledges he was a goner.

But the wily quarry had done nothing of the sort, as Job soon learned to his discomfiture. In the long cliff-wall of Dickie Barre exist a few scalable points, where steep slopes of earth afford hazardous ascent; and up one of these, slipping and skidding but surely mounting, the gamy buck had gone. For a moment the pursuer stood daunted.

"By Godfrey!" he ejaculated. "Ain't nothin' the matter with you, mister buck! Ye've got legs like a steam ingyne—'less'n ye've growed some wings." Then his jaw clamped shut, and through his teeth he added, "But if ye think ye've lost me ye've got another think comin!"

He climbed; or, rather, crawled, using hands and gun-butt as well as feet. On the hummocky, brushy upland he found only the same mocking spoor streaking away into more snow. Listening, he heard nothing but the sough of a chill wind among scrub pines and a far-off baying of dogs.

Half an hour of tenacious tracking brought no sight or sound of the game. Time and again the trailer narrowly escaped a fall into some narrow crevasse in the rock, half hidden by the treacherous white coverlet of winter. They were deep, those pitfalls, and a man who slipped into one of them would never again go hunting. Day's end was drawing near. So at length Job loaded his pipe and rested before heading homeward.

"Ye've got me skunked this time, ol' spindle-legs," he acknowledged, with a wry smile. "But 'less'n ye keep right on a-travelin' an' git outen this kentry for good an' all I'll drop ye one o' these days."

THUS solacing himself, he smoked for several minutes. In the silence came again the baying and barking of dogs.

Under the visor of the smoker's cap grew a thoughtful frown. His brown eyes squinted toward the north, whence sounded that canine outcry. It now was nearer and clearer, and its undertone was ferocious.

"Wonder how come them dawgs round there," he pondered. "Ain't nobody a-livin' over yender. Le's see, though, that's pretty nigh where ol' Limpy Louie hangs out. But Limpy don't keep no dawgs—"

He started, eyes widening. Abruptly he knocked out his pipe and pocketed it.

"By mighty! I bet it's that pack o' wild dawgs from over Stony Kill way. Bad as wolves, folks say. An' sure as shootin', they're down round ol' Limpy's shack somewheres. Must be somethin' wrong. Limpy, he hates dawgs—an' he's a dead shot with that long gun o' hisn. Mebbe—"

Leaving the conjecture unfinished, he struck off toward the ugly uproar. Across the path appeared a confused chain of pawprints, veering out of the scrub at the left and vanishing into it at the right. The trail was fully a day old.

Decidedly, something was wrong with old Limpy Louie, the crippled Indian recluse who dwelt alone in the forest down below. His sole means of livelihood was trapping, a vocation at which, despite his stiff leg, he was uncannily adept. This occupation could hardly prosper, however, with wild dogs ravaging the region; and under normal conditions he should have promptly taken the warpath against the invaders. As Job hurried onward his lean face tightened. He was recalling the unwritten history of the pack from Stony Kill.

Over on that creek, some ten miles to the west, had lived a misanthrope whose only companions were several savage dogs. He had died suddenly, and the brutes had gone wild. There were ugly rumors as to the manner of his death; and, whether or not his dogs were responsible for his end, there could be no question that they were killers thereafter. Down at the settlement of Granite, sheep and calves had been slain and devoured. Up near Five Mile Post a runaway cow had been found stripped to bones. Over at Long Pond a lone woodsman had fought off two wolfish beasts with his ax. Now and then a young dog or two had been shot by hunters, but the older animals had been too crafty to meet this fate, and, by their annual litters, had caused the fierce band to increase rather than diminish in number. Hitherto they had confined their ravages largely to their home region, swooping out occasionally into the lowlands, but soon retreating to their own

fastnesses. Now, evidently, some or all of them had come east.

The old path began to swing in the wrong direction. Job abandoned it, steering by ear straight through the woods. The footing was not bad, and he made hardly a sound. Yet suddenly, as if heeding some mysterious warning, every dog fell silent. Not a snarl, not even a sniff, sounded from the unseen spot, now close ahead, where that malignant chorus had bayed.

The woods opened. In a small clearing stood a cabin, door tight shut, chimney smokeless. All along the front, and away around the corners, the snow was trampled; and on the door were white blobs left by the paws of animals which had stood erect and shoved. Yet in all that open space there now was not one dog. In the grayish shadow-land under the farther trees, however, Job glimpsed a couple of lank forms and the glimmer of silently snarling teeth. He threw up his gun. They vanished as if snatched into nowhere.

"Limpy!" he called. "Limpy Louie! Yo-ho!"

No answer.

Advancing to the door, he kicked the planks.

"He-e-ey! Limpy! Wake up! Say somethin'! This is Job Briggs. Ye all right?"

Silence.

He put a shoulder to the door. The barrier did not budge. Two more calls brought no response. Passing to a tiny window, he tried to peer through its grimy glass, but saw nothing; went to the other, and fared better. In the interior gloom became visible the shadowy outline of a bunk and an indeterminate huddle of blankets. The blanketed form showed no movement.

"Dead, an' froze stiff," was the investigator's judgment. Frowning, he studied the dimensions of the window. After a minute he reversed his rifle and drove its butt through glass and partitions. A few more thumps wrecked the frame also. After yanking out the débris he essayed working his shoulders through the opening. It was a tight squeeze, but he found it possible. So, leaving his weapon leaning against the wall, he hauled himself in.

"Huh! Ye're alive, be ye?" he exclaimed.

Through an opening in the blankets Limpy Louie's eyes were watching him; cavernous, sick, but living eyes. Now the Indian's gaze went beyond him. Job glanced out and snatched his rifle into the room. At the edge of the woods had gathered a dozen gaunt but heavily built mongrels which stood like hovering ghouls.

As his rifle rose the beasts swerved aside or sprang backward into cover. Two of them, though, were not quite quick enough. They collided, snapped at each other, stood for an instant in deadlock. In that instant the gun spat. One dog fell, howled, rolled over and lurched behind a tree. The other darted away, evading Job's next shot. Then all were gone from sight; but not from sound.

The wounded animal, yelping and whining, drew away into the woods. All at once out broke a clamor which stirred the listening man's hair. One fearful howl—a struggling noise—a ravenous dissonance of snarls and snuffles. Job turned away.

"Reg'lar wolves!" he muttered. "Dawg eat dawg! Still an' all, we'd ruther 'twould be a dawg than us, hey, Limpy? Now what ails ye? An' how long ye been laid up?"

SLOWLY Limpy Louie moved. A skinny hand worked feebly up among the blankets toward his face. His visitor walked across and drew the covering down from his mouth.

"Sick. Four day," came a thin whisper.

"Huh! Four days! Too sick to keep up a fire? What's the matter?"

"Chist."

Job stared into the beak-like countenance, thinned to a hatchet-edge by hunger and pain.

"Chist? Misery on to yer lungs? Gorry! Inf'mation o' the lungs, I bet; what some folks calls pneumony. If ye've got it good, Limpy, I mistrust ye're a goner. Ye're tougher'n ironwood, I know, but— Wal, nev' mind. Le's see what I can do for ye. Et any vittles lately?"

"Can't."

"Uh-huh."

Job rubbed his jaw, surveying the whole place. Pelts of fox and raccoon, mink and skunk, muskrat and weasel lined the walls on their drying-frames, creating an indescribable atmosphere which made the Samaritan's nose wrinkle. Food supplies were scant and very coarse. Meat or other means of making broth were non-existent. Moreover, Job had no skill in preparing

such sustenance, even had the materials been at hand.

"Wal," he decided, "there's jest about one chance for ye, as I can see, an' that's to git ye home to my place. My mom, she's pretty good at doctorin' up a feller, an' my wife's the best cook ye ever see. So ye can jest make up yer mind to take a little ride— Uh? What ye say?"

The wrinkled forehead had drawn into a scowl, and the pinched lips were moving.

"Nuh!" came the hoarse refusal. "Le' me be. Dawgs—" A slight jerk of the head toward the door.

"Aw, I'll keep the dawgs offen ye. They're a passel o' sneakin' monglers*, an' they dasn't tackle a feller with a gun. But we've got to git goin'—"

"Nuh! Git out! I no go!"

"What! Why, ye balky ol' fool, ye bet ye're a-goin'! I can't stay here an' take care o' ye, an' this ain't no fitten place for ye to lay. I'm a-goin' to wrop ye up an'— Huh? What say? Oh, I see. It's them skins that worries ye? Dawgs might git into here an' chaw 'em up? Wal, le's see."

He glanced around and overhead. Up above was a tiny loft, to which led a crude pole ladder against one wall. Job ascended a few rungs, peered at a miscellany of junk, and pushed it aside against the roof. Lowering himself, he collected the old man's precious pelts. With these he again climbed, stacked them neatly, came down, and made assurance doubly sure by wrenching the ladder away from the wall.

"There ye be, Limpy. It'll take three dawgs a-hangin' on to each other's tails to jump that high, an' dawgs don't jump that way. Now— Ye ol' varmint! Drop that!"

The hermit, his face contracted into a mask of determination, had managed to reach the long muzzle-loading gun standing at the head of his bunk. He was too weak to lift it; but he was trying.

"Nuh!" he panted. "No go! Git out!"

"Ye pore loon!" snapped Job. "It'd serve ye right if I done it—an' left the door open for them dawgs! If all o' the Injuns that used to be round here was like you it's no wonder they died out—they didn't have sense 'nough to live! But ye're a-goin' to my house, an' ye're a-goin' now, if I have to knock ye into the head to git ye there. Leggo that gun!"

The gun dropped, though not in compliance with the command; it simply slipped from the numb hands. Forthwith Job seized the recalcitrant in a masterful grip, rewrapped him snugly in the blankets, and swung the mummy-like bundle up across his back. He knew the most effective way of carrying such a load, and to his robust strength the starveling oldster was a light burden. Limpy, finding resistance futile, ceased his feeble struggles and rode forth into the wintry woods.

"This'll be kind o' rough on to ye, mebbe," vouchsafed Job. "It's a kind of a long ways, an' I ain't no saddle-hoss. But 'less'n I have to drop ye an' crack a dawg or so 'twon't do ye no harm. I'm a-goin' right up the Kill to the road, an' after that it'll be easy pluggin'. Now keep yer mouth shut till we git to where it's warm. Then we'll fill it full o' hot soup."

The reply was a faint grunt—evoked, perhaps, by that promise of hot broth. With eyes sweeping the ground ahead, ears alert toward the rear and rifle dangling ready at the end of the long arm encircling his rider's legs, the rescuer forged ahead through the chaos of boulders, brush, and trees, now growing dim with twilight.

In the first few hundred yards he made several pauses to look back. Not once did he spy dogs. Whether they had remained behind or, as he felt, were stealthily following, they were invisible. The swift shot which had stricken one of their mates had been a grim lesson to the rest, and so long as Job retained his footing and his gun there would evidently be little danger from them. So he buckled down to steady plodding and allowed his thoughts more latitude.

"Injuns is funny," he ruminated. "Fools, that's what. Lookit this ol' numbskull, a-tryin' to stay home an' die when a feller wants to help him. Mebbe I'm a fool, too. S'posin' 'twas the other way round, an' I got laid out, would he bust his back to help me? Not much, he wouldn't. He ain't got no more heart than a bob-cat, an' he don't care 'bout nothin' but killin' critters an' skinnin' 'em. Jest an animil, that's all he is. That's all any Injun is. S'posin' he gits well ag'in, he'll steal somethin' outen my house, most likely."

Wherein he was but echoing the average trapsman's opinion of Indians. In other generations white man and red had mercilessly ambushed each other in this rugged region, and thereby given to the place its

*"Monglers" is correct, being hill version of "mongrels."

suggestive name of the Traps. Those days now were long dead, and virtually all the Indians with them; but vestiges of hereditary distrust still remained. Yet it never occurred to Job to repent of his action in rescuing this old aborigine or to begrudge the labor of transporting him to comfort. Straining, sweating, he put one foot before the other in ceaseless effort to get the thing done.

TWO hours later he lurched into the road, his way now faintly illumined by a young moon. Another hour, and he entered his own yard; bawled hoarsely for the opening of the door, and tramped into his warm kitchen. There he eased his burden to the floor.

"Limpy Louie," he explained to his women folk. "Got a misery on to his chist. Ain't et nothin' for two-three days. Fix him a bed on to the sofy an' git some broth or somethin' into him. Mom, see if ye can doctor him."

The replies of the two women were typical.

Old Mis' Briggs peevishly snapped:

" 'Bout time ye got home—supper all cold an' everything! What ye bringin' that dirty ol' Injun into here for? Land sakes, it's time he died, ten year ago! An' he ain't a-goin' to lay into none o' my clean beddin', neither. My lawd, he smells like skunk!"

But, for all her scolding, she was scanning the recumbent form with the probing eye of capable diagnosis, and her son knew she would do her best.

Faith, his gentle-hearted young wife, looked pityingly at the hollow-cheeked face on the floor while she murmured:

"I'm awful glad ye're home, Job. I was gittin' worried about ye. Set up an' eat, an' I'll fix up somethin' for this feller. So you're Limpy Louie, mister? Pretty sick, I guess. But don't ye worry, we'll have ye spry as a kitten pretty soon."

The aged Indian's half-shut eyes dwelt on her without a flicker. He answered never a word. Job unwrapped his mummy-case, exposing a ragged figure.

"There he is, mom. Now git to work on to him. I guess mebbe you'd smell skunky too if ye'd been a-layin' where he has, 'long o' them hides an' things. Feels kind o' good to be by a fire ag'in, hey, Limpy? Wal, lay quiet. I'm a-goin' to eat. Gorramighty, I'm starved!"

He sat and ate prodigiously. His mother asked Limpy a few questions as to his condition, got faint replies and began manufacturing mustard poultices. Faith evolved a steaming soup from something or other, meanwhile making up a bed with the narrow sofa and some chairs. Nor, despite the old woman's dictum, did she spare clean bedding. A folded quilt, soft blankets, and more quilts formed as snug a nest as any woodsman could desire; and when the hermit had been undressed by Job, plastered by Mis' Briggs, and fed by Faith, he could hardly have been made more comfortable in a metropolitan hospital. Yet he gave no sign of content. His wizened visage remained fixed in lines of gloom.

"He ain't got pneumony, I don't think," opined Mis' Briggs, "but he's mighty nigh it. He's got a bad spell o' grippe. I'll stew up some yerbs, an' 'tween them an' the plasters an' the sweatin' he'd ought to git over it. My land, take them blankits an' clo'es o' hisn to the barn!"

Job complied, and, while gone, did some lantern-light chores. On his return he found the patient lying quiet, with eyes closed.

"Gone asleep, hey?" he asked. Faith nodded. "Good 'nough. I'm a-goin' to do the same thing myself right soon. I'm tired. 'Twarn't no easy job a-luggin' him all this ways in the snow, I tell ye. Seemed like he got ten pound heavier to every rod."

"How come ye over there?" questioned his mother.

Job told his tale, talking in undertones. Concluding, he asserted:

"An' I'm a-goin' to git that deer yit, an' some o' them dawgs too, 'less'n they clear outen here. Gorry, jest imagine ol' Limpy a-layin' there sick, an' them —— a-tryin' to git to him! 'Twould drive some folks loony."

"Injuns ain't got no feelin's," she scoffed.

"Nope, I guess that's right. I don't s'pose he'll even thank me for takin' him outen there. Jest the same, tomorrer I'm a-goin' back to his place an' lock it up so's them critters can't den up into it. An' then, if he'll tell where his traps lay, I'll go see what's into 'em, an' save the skins if there's any wuth savin'. Ho hum! Wal, I'm goin' to bed."

He did so, and the others soon followed.

None had observed the relieved look which passed over the trapper's face at Job's announcement of his intentions for the morrow. Limpy had not been slumbering. It was not until the house was dark and silent that he relaxed into profound sleep.

In the morning he looked better. His eyes were clearer; his voice a little stronger as he answered his host's questions concerning his layout of traps. Aside from this topic he talked not at all. Nor did he attempt to move. Dumb and quiescent he lay, allowing nature to work her reconstructive processes within him. To the stalwart hillman's cheery banter he returned no response. And not the slightest shadow of a smile lightened his somber visage when Job, departing, jokingly warned him:

"An' don't ye go flirtin' with my womenfolks while I'm gone, neither. One han'some young feller like you tried it, an' he's dead."

IT WAS a gray day, hinting at more snow. Job tramped first to the old orchard, half hoping to find his deer thereabouts, but not much disappointed when he found that the wise animal had failed to return. The critter had gotten a bad scare, he told himself, and would be shy of the place for a few days; but he'd come back by and by—unless those dogs killed him or ran him out of the country. The thought accentuated the hunter's hostility toward the marauding brood from Stony Kill, and he proceeded at once to the cabin.

All was quiet when he stole into the clearing. A slow, cold breeze was blowing at his back, but he gave no thought to it. So deserted seemed the spot that, after one short look at the house, he let his gaze rove about the encompassing woods, finding no sign of the pack. Carelessly he moved cabinward. Then, in the shadow beyond the open door, a form took shape.

The rifle leaped up, kicked back. At the sharp bark of the weapon the house vomited dogs. A knot of them bolted through the doorway; a bounding string of them shot from the wrecked window. For a few seconds the clearing was alive with dodging, scurrying fugitives at which the man snapped hasty bullets. Then all were gone into the forest, one yelping shrilly as if wounded. Job, reloading his empty piece, listened for a recurrence of yesterday's combat noises, but none came. Apparently the yelper had been merely grazed by the flying lead and more scared than hurt.

Within the house he found the body of the animal downed by his first shot; an ugly brute of mastiff strain, well grown, but young. Job scowled. The old arch-criminals, it seemed, always escaped. He scowled still more as he looked about the cabin, disordered and befouled by the beasts. It cost half an hour's work to put the place to rights and sweep it out with a woodsman's brush-broom found in a corner. The master's treasure of furs, however, was unharmed.

When Job left the house it was once more safe from intrusion; the door barred, the window blocked by stakes. In the middle of the clearing hung a grim warning to the pack—their dead mate, ignominously suspended by the tail from a tall pole tripod.

Following his unwilling guest's directions as he remembered them, he then made the round of the traps. The results were virtually nil. Most of the snares had not been sprung; a condition for which, rightly or wrongly, he blamed the dogs. Two others held paws, but nothing more; the captives had gnawed themselves free and hobbled away to their dens. A few small beasties still lay in the clutches of steel jaws, but all were worthless—dead and mangled by other prowlers. These traps Job left untouched, for later inspection by the owner. All the others he sprung with a stick, rendering them harmless. He had no intention of patrolling that layout daily, and saw no sense in allowing good fur to be caught and wasted. Limpy's business must wait for Limpy himself to run it.

Snow began to float down as he ended his tour, and he went home. The Indian listened without comment to his report, then turned his face to the wall and dozed.

"Dummy!" acidly remarked Mis' Briggs. "I declare to gracious, he might's well be a worm, for all the use he makes o' his tongue."

"Wal," grinned Job, "that's somethin' nobody'd ever say 'bout you, mom."

"I sh'd hope not! The Lord, He give human bein's a mouth to talk with—"

"An' if talkin' is obeyin' the Lord, ye'll shorely go to heaven when ye die. Wal, leave him 'lone, 'ceptin' when he wants somethin'. He's used to peace an' quiet."

Her reply was a sharp sniff. Blending

with it came a vague sound from the sofa. Job looked inquiringly at the immobile figure, but heard nothing more. Perhaps the hermit, after listening all the forenoon to Mis' Briggs' habitually tart speech, was grunting heartfelt agreement with her son's irony.

The snow fell fitfully for the rest of the day, and that night, and the next day. Job passed the time with various small jobs in house or barn. Limpy Louie improved visibly and more and more rapidly as the vitality in his tough body reasserted itself. The misery in his chest died out; appetite sharpened; his face began to lose its emaciation, and his movements, when he made them, were sure and reasonably fast—particularly when eating. Lassitude, however, remained. Between meals he lay inert, only his eyes moving. Those eyes persistently followed the fair-faced, soft-voiced girl who was Job's wife, and who occasionally gave him a cheery smile. She was a restful sort of person, was Faith, and in more ways than one the antithesis of her mother-in-law. The older woman, though at heart ready enough to do anything to aid the ailing, must needs grumble and scold. The younger quietly observed what should be done, did it, and said nothing at all about it.

As for personal appearance—it was hardly strange that even a crusty old hardshell like Limpy Louie should prefer to look at the fresh-cheeked, blue-eyed girl rather than at her sallow, warty-nosed senior. But, as before, he spoke only when questioned, and his expression remained dour, his eyes unreadable.

So came the third day. Storm was gone; sun flooded a gleaming world. Limpy sat up and asked for his clothes. He received them, carefully patched and mended by Faith.

"Feelin' pretty pert ag'in?" she smiled. "I'm glad. But ye mustn't try to go till ye're all well. Besides, yer blankets ain't ready. I want to fix 'em up a mite. Now come to table an' let's see how much a good healthy Injun can eat."

"Ump," grunted Limpy.

He ate like a wolf; took pipe and tobacco from his host, and ensconced himself in a comfortable chair by the stove. And there he remained all that day and most of the next. Reason, or instinct, or nature told him that he needed this continuance of rest, and he heeded the counsel. While he waited, Faith gave his blankets an all-day airing in the brilliant sun and pure winds, then deftly repaired various rents.

MEANWHILE Job again went hunting. Of his deer he found no new trace. Therefore he devoted his attention to the dogs. By relentless tracking on the first day he found them, and shot one while the rest took cover. The next day he fared much better. The air brought to him their pack-yell, telling him that they held something at bay. Following the noise, he caught them leaping around an isolated oak, in the upper branches of which squatted their age-old enemy, a wildcat. The breeze carried his scent to them, but so intent were they on the spitting feline that he had time to take deliberate aim before opening fire. Then he shot with such speed and precision that three of them flopped lifeless before the howling gang broke. Thereupon he jerked his muzzle aloft and neatly drilled the wildcat.

"Ow! Wow! Rowdy-dow!" he chortled. "This kentry's a-gittin' onhealthy for varmints! Six dawgs an' a cat, now, that won't snoop no more. But it's kind o' funny—" he frowned a little "—it seems like that pack don't git no smaller. Is more of 'em comin' into here from Stony, or didn't I see 'em all the fust time? Wal, it don't make no odds, long as my ca'tridges holds out."

Slinging the cat across one shoulder, he went home, whistling merrily. A rollicking tune was still pouring from his lips when he entered the house. There it abruptly ceased.

He found the regular inhabitants and the temporary tenant of his home all on their feet. Mis' Briggs, eyes snapping, was railing furiously at Limpy Louie, who, though standing passive, was fronting her with expression distinctly unpleasant. Faith, a little aside, looked perturbed.

"What's the matter here?" demanded Job.

"Matter 'nough!" retorted his mother. "This ol' heathen, now he's well ag'in, is a-tryin' to git funny round here! Ye better stay to home an' pertect yer wife when ye lug dirty ol' varmints outen the woods an' dump 'em on to us, 'stead o' gallivantin' off an' leavin' 'em to git a big head an' act like they owned us! Limpy, ye mizzable ol' idjut, ye—"

"Whoa up!" barked her son. "Talk sense or talk nothin'! I asked ye what's the matter. Faith, what's this all about?"

"Why—why, it ain't nothin'—he didn't mean no harm," faltered the girl. "He—he jest—"

"He jest grabbed on to yer wife an' squeezed her hand an' started makin' love to her!" thrust Mis' Briggs. "Him! An Injun! A sneakin' ol' animil that we've been a-savin' his life an' a-feedin' like a king an' a-slavin' over—an' him a-smokin' yer tobaccer—"

"Mom! You be quiet a minute!" Faith's head was up now, and her firm tone arrested the tirade. "All he done, Job, was to take hold of my hand when I was nigh him an' say, 'You nice gal.' I was so s'prized I jest stood there a minute. An' then mom lit into him. That's all there was to it."

"No, 'tain't nuther!" contradicted the old woman. "He's been a-settin' round here day in an' day out a-watchin' ye like a snake a-watchin' a bird—an' he's jest as treacherous as a copperhead! My land, the look o' them eyes o' hisn has been 'nough to give a body the creeps. If ye'd had any eyes into yer own head ye'd seen it yerself."

"We've all of us got a right to look at folks," countered Faith.

But her charitable view of the hermit's queer action did not prevail against the innate prejudices of mother and son. Job recalled that persistent watch of his wife, and now his face hardened. Hillmen are not an overly tolerant breed, nor are they slow to resent any disrespect, real or fancied, to their women. Though easy-going, this young stalwart was a hillman to the core. He wheeled toward the Indian.

Neither man spoke. Bleak-faced, grim-jawed, the younger confronted the older, who peered straight back with cold, unwinking gaze. For a few seconds the room was very still. Then the trapper turned deliberately away; walked to a hook, took down his coat, put it on; gathered up his pile of blankets from a stand in the corner; hobbled to the door, and passed out.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" snapped Mis' Briggs. "An' if ye ever fetch home 'nother—"

"Shut yer mouth," curtly commanded Job. After one look at him she shut it, and, for once, kept it shut. Eyes still hard, he proceeded to the shed-room and skinned the wildcat.

"Jest like I thought," he muttered. "No decency into any Injun that ever lived. Ongrateful as a wild animil. Mom's right. Jest a dirty ol' varmint. Good thing for him he warn't no younger. Otherways—" His mouth tightened, and his empty hand curled into a fist.

A little later, however, following another discussion of the affair with his wife, he somewhat moderated his first harsh judgment, granting that "the ol' fool didn't know no better." Aside from this concession his opinion remained unchanged; namely, that the Indian was wholly ungrateful and hardly human. With that he put his recent guest from his mind.

A couple of weeks took their leisurely course. When in the mood, Job went on further hunting trips. His interest in the chase now had reverted, however, to its first object, the elusive deer. He had tired of dog-trailing—perhaps because those animals had become exceedingly evasive. The repeated shootings, culminating in the swift slaughter at the oak, apparently had inspired in the survivors a keen dread. At any rate, he seldom saw their spoor and hardly ever heard their cry, and then only in the far distance. How Limpy Louie was faring with them and with the trap-line he neither knew nor cared, for he made no more visits to the region beyond the plateau.

New Year's day drew near. Its approach intensified his determination to get that buck. Several times he had found fresh tracks, and once he narrowly missed surprizing his quarry again at the orchard, whence it had departed only a few minutes before his arrival. As before, he tried to stalk it; and, as before, he had to climb Dickie Barre, only to fail in his quest. The critter was making a fool of him, he told himself in chagrin, but he'd run him down yet. And, at last, he did.

THE end came with the ending of the old year. The sky was gray; the light wan; the air piercingly cold, with an east wind. In the hunter's mind had grown a conviction that he would sight that deer only on Dickie Barre. On Dickie Barre, therefore, he worked nearly all day, unraveling one meandering trace after another, going without dinner to stick to the hunt. Since the wind remained steady, he must needs keep to the westward, or toward the Peters Kill country.

It was rough and brambly in there, and time and again he muttered maledictions on that unchanging current of air.

Twilight was at hand, and the mental gloom of another failure was forming in his mind, when, vague against the wind, came the ululation of the Stony Kill pack. It rose from the northwest, where the sprawling hill descended at its easiest grade. Job spoke bitter words. The howling of that detested brood at the end of his fruitless day was a mockery, a taunt, a downright insult. He condemned them, their ancestors and their progeny. But all at once he fell silent and listened intently. Something was coming; something not canine; something moving unguardedly through the brush. And then, scarcely fifty feet away, traveling southward, appeared the long-sought deer.

He was moving with some speed, but not with the reckless flight of panic. Antlers laid well back and ears gauging the distance of the pursuers, he ran with easy, regular bounds, apparently heading for some covert well suited to a stand. He never saw the man who shot him. At the crack of the rifle he dropped as if struck by lightning.

"Glory!" exulted Job. Plunging forward with gun ready, he found no second bullet necessary. Killed by a clean shot behind the shoulder, the handsome creature lay utterly still. For a minute or two the slayer gloated. Then he threw sarcastic thanks toward the northwest.

"Much 'bliged, ye yeller varmints! Drove this smarty right to me, didn't ye? Keep a-comin', an' ye can smell o' the place where he fell down. An' that's all ye git outen it —a smell."

Chuckling, he bent and heaved the body up on his back. There was no time to dress it and thus lighten it. Night was creeping closer every minute, and the way home was rough and long. Bent forward, he plodded away at the best possible pace, meaning to get off the plateau before darkness became too deep.

As he went, the hue and cry behind grew momentarily louder. All at once it was cut short. Job paused, looked back, but saw nothing of the dogs, curtained from his view by intervening brush. With a short laugh he resumed his way. They had reached the spot of the kill and were having that one smell which was their empty reward.

A minute or two later came a snarling noise of baffled rage. It died. Then sounded only the crunch of Job's own progress and the chill whisper of the wind.

Up over hummocks, down through drifted hollows, into patches of leafless undergrowth and on through clumps of pine toiled the victor. Soon he realized that he was tired. He had been in motion all day, eating nothing since breakfast; the deer was heavy and growing heavier; the footing bad and, seemingly, becoming worse. His feet dragged, and when he wallowed through a sunken spot the effort took toll of his strength. Now and then he slipped, and caught his balance with difficulty.

The deer, swaying and bumping as he lurched ahead, dropped splotches of warm blood. Back a little way, a knot of sinister shapes stole along soundlessly, eyes flaming with a more ravenous glow at each recurrent spot of red.

At the top of a swell of rock, Job paused again. Before him descended a short but steep pitch, with a suspicious-looking depression at its base—a long, narrow dent in the white. Was it, or was it not, one of those treacherous rifts, roofed across by wind-swept snow? The light was becoming very dim. He eyed the suggestive hollow with misgiving. Then his ear caught a sniff from behind. He jerked about.

Half visible among bush-stalks a few rods away, stealthy forms moved. The pack which he had contemptuously dismissed from mind was close upon him. With a wrathful growl he dropped the deer, thrust the rifle forward. His growl was echoed from half a score of savage throats; but the beasts gave ground before the menace of the gun. Then it ceased to be a menace.

Job's feet flew from under him. His left knee struck with terrific force on bare rock. He was being dragged backward. Desperately he clutched at the stone. He stopped himself, clawed for his dropped rifle, struggled to his feet. Agony streaked from the injured knee. An involuntary groan escaped him. An instant later he was shooting for his life.

At his fall the pack had surged forward. Fangs grinning, they now rushed. Before the slashing flame and ear-shocking reports of the gun they as suddenly halted short, somersaulted back, or streaked aside. One fell dead. Two dropped, yowled, and

dragged themselves away. Then the gun was empty.

"Git, ye cussed copperheads!" roared Job. "Git, or I'll blow ye all to— Huh!"

The abrupt ending of his threat was caused by a dismaying discovery. He had no more cartridges. His fingers, diving into the pocket where the few reserves had been, found only a hole at the bottom.

He darted a look around. No cartridges lay there; all had slipped from his coat somewhere back in the snowy waste. Nor was the deer now in sight. Its fall from his back had started a snowslide on that steep stone, and both snow and buck had gone into that rift—for a rift it was, now gaping back and unconcealed. He himself had stood on a patch of hidden ice, which had downed him when the sliding snow tugged at his feet. Now his hurt leg was almost useless. Down below the dogs were slinking about, but not running away. Very soon they would understand his predicament. They would attack. Hampered by his injury, he could not fight them all off with clubbed gun. They would get him.

ALL this flickered through his mind in that one sweep of his surroundings. Close at hand stood a scrub pine. He forced his legs to carry him to that pine. With another lift of the rifle he made the beasts dodge again. Then he dropped the useless weapon and hauled himself up into the tree.

He mounted none too soon. A fierce rush, a malignant blare of triumph, and the brutes were leaping at him. The low branches beat them down. He fought his way to the top, some twelve feet up. And there, holding himself on a precarious perch of bending boughs, he stayed.

For the first few minutes he exercised his complete vocabulary of vituperation on the circling destroyers below. If tones meant anything, their answering language was more virulent than his worst. Stark ferocity and vindictive hatred rang in their merciless voices. This man was not merely a chance unfortunate; he was not only the interloper who had cheated them of prey; he was their worst enemy, the nemesis who had ruthlessly harried them and repeatedly shot down their brethren. Time and again the wind had brought his scent to their nostrils, and they knew it as unmistakably as men know the faces of their sworn foes. Now, at last, they had cornered him. From cavernous throats they poured canine vilification and lethal threats.

Again and again they sprang upward, teeth clashing in mad snaps. A couple of them even essayed to climb the low-growing ladder of boughs, forcing themselves upward for several feet. Job grew silent and curled a hand around the hilt of his hunting-knife. The climbers did not reach him, however, for they lost balance and fell. Followed a fresh access of vocal fury.

Presently, assured of their captive's inability to escape, the beasts inspected the narrow crevasse into which the deer had disappeared. Whining, they coursed along its brink, sniffing hungrily, seeking a safe line of descent. When Job moved, though, they charged back at the tree. Two or three such rushes between rift and refuge convinced the pack that they could not reach the deer, and the man that he could not yet descend. Then the killers reverted to cannibalism, fell upon their dead comrade, and destroyed also one of the wounded. The other had hidden somewhere—perhaps under snow.

The man shivered, and remained cold. The wind had cut through his clothing, damp from perspiration, which now became like a shroud of ice. His stomach, long empty, could furnish no body-fuel to offset the freezing air. Hands and feet grew numb. His swollen knee stiffened to semi-rigidity. Each movement was a hazardous, painful struggle on a rocking perch. Yet he had to move at short intervals to avoid stoppage of circulation by the undersized boughs bearing his weight. With increasing concern he wondered how long he could hold himself aloft.

Perhaps the dogs, now partly sated, would tire of the siege and depart. For a time he remained as quiet as possible. The hope proved vain. Although not quite so noisy, they ringed him around, watching with bestial hate. When at length he was compelled to move again they tore the air with anticipatory cries and tensed to spring if he should drop. Their vengeful attitude bespoke unrelenting determination.

Overhead the murky sky began to clear, and a big moon to drop its pale light. Green eyes took on a more sinister sheen; bare fangs glimmered more wickedly. Job shivered again. With one fumbling hand he dug up his pipe, intending to load and smoke it

for solace and cheer. It slipped from his benumbed fingers and bumped softly down through the branches. The instant it struck the snow two dogs were at it, jaws snapping like traps. The rest bayed eerily.

Job's jaw set harder than ever. He beat the hand against one thigh until it became somewhat less wooden, then maneuvered it carefully within his coat, detaching his suspenders. These were fairly new and very strong. Working them loose, he tied them around his waist and made a hard knot around the slim trunk of the pine.

"Mebbe I'll stay here till this tree falls down," he muttered thickly. "But ye won't git me till then!"

The hateful chorus answered. Making another slight change in his position, he drooped forward on the trunk and partly relaxed.

Time grew vague. The moon shone; the wind blew; the dogs remained, clamoring at his slightest move; that was all. At length he became warmer. His leg hurt very little now. His head grew heavy. Pretty comfortable up here, after all, when a feller got used to it. He could take a little nap just as well as not. He guessed he would. Good joke on to them dawgs. At the thought he laughed. He knew he was laughing; but he did not know that the mirth was internal, and that his face remained rigid. Neither did he realize that his body was stiffening into inflexibility.

IN UPON his peace broke a sudden noise. Somebody had shot a gun. One—two! Two barrels. Sounded kind of heavy, too. Bet there was buckshot into them charges. A horrid hullabaloo succeeded. Dogs screamed in death-agony, yelped in wounded retreat, yowled in frenzied flight. But it all was curiously far away. He did not lift his head, nor even open his eyes. He was too comfortable. What did he care if somebody a long way off shot some dogs? He didn't.

A voice came. It called him with irritating persistency. It, too, was somewhere in the distance. Why couldn't the feller shut up? He wanted to sleep. Let the darn fool holler. He wasn't going to answer.

Now he was falling out of bed. He hit the floor with a hard bump. But it didn't hurt a mite. Well, he'd just sleep on the floor the rest of the night. Too much work to crawl back into the blankets.

His face began to hurt; then his hands. Needle-pricks of fire were all through them. He was bumping around, too, and somebody was pounding him. Ouch! His knee!

He woke up. It was true. Somebody was mauling him, rubbing dirt in his face—or was it snow? He resisted, or tried to; but his arms moved with curious slowness. Then his knee gave a sharper twinge, and the pain spurred him into fuller consciousness. He began to thrash about in real earnest, to strike at a gaunt figure which was mercilessly manhandling him. In retaliation he got stinging slaps in the face, then more blows all up and down his body. Hot rage surged through him. A mist lifted from his brain, and he saw with clear vision.

He was in the snow at the base of the tree. Against a branch of that tree leaned a long double gun. Over him, breathing hard, stood a predatory-visaged old Indian. Around him lay a number of shot-riddled dogs.

"Git up!" panted Limpy Louie for the twentieth time. "Git up an' walk! Wan' me carry ye like papoose? W'at the ——! I cut stick an' lick ye! Git!"

Angrily Job lurched up—and nearly fell again as the bad knee buckled under him. A swift hand caught and steadied him.

"Hurt leg?" quizzed the Indian. "W'at ye do up here?"

"Huntin' deer. Got him, too. He's down that crevice."

The trapper walked gingerly to the edge of the rift, squinted down, came back.

"Tomorrer I git him out, mebbe. Catch rope on to horns. Come on. Walk 'fore ye freeze some more. Come my house."

"Naw! I'm a-goin' home."

"Too fur. My place nearest."

"I'm a-goin' home, I tell ye! Womenfolks'll be worried to death. How come ye up here?"

"Hear rifle shoot quick. Hear dawg beller long time. Dawg say man up tree. Bimeby I come see. Come slow, come easy, dawg no hear, give 'em buckshot. No more dawg round here now, I bet ye. Too many kilt, rest run outen kentry, never come back. Now git! Ye got to walk or crawl. Mebbe we walk together, hey? Ye got one leg. I got one leg. Two leg, two man. Come on."

"I can do my own walkin'. Much 'bliged to ye."

"Ne' mind. Walk!"

Job tried, after fumblingly tucking in his dangling suspender-ends. The loop around the tree had been severed by steel. Crippled old Louie had had to climb and cut him loose, let him drop and thereafter rub and beat him awake. Now he watched the youth start off. After a few staggering steps, Job fell.

"No good," commented Limpy. "Grab on to me. Lean heavy. Now git!"

Grudgingly Job followed his counsel. And under the moon the grotesque pair labored across the plateau, locked together by arm-holds, stumbling and often falling, but ever arising and pegging on. It was terrific work, but the wiry old fellow who so recently had been a feeble wreck now was tireless; and hard work was what the younger man needed. So in time they slid down the steep path where the deer had been wont to ascend, and struggled on until they reached the road.

"Limpy," then panted Job, "did ye s'picion 'twas me up into that tree?"

"Yup. Win' blow good, I hear plain. I know Job Briggs shoot. Other rifles round here single shot. Yourn repeater, shoot —— fast."

No more was said for half a mile. Then Job gruffly informed his rescuer:

"If ye git out that deer ye can have him. Noo Year's present."

A grunt. They progressed another hundred yards before Limpy spoke; and then his remarks bore on a different subject.

"Yer ol' woman say Injun dirty varmint, watch yer wife like snake, mean bad. Ask ol' woman if she 'members gal, name o' Minne. Tha's all."

Job, laboring heavily, made no reply.

At last they reached the door of the Briggs house, shoved it open, and staggered into the presence of two anxious women. And there, as Job stumbled to a chair and fell into it, Limpy Louie turned to the speechless pair a wrinkled, crooked grin.

"Happy Noo Year!" he said. Wherewith he faced about, dragged his deformed leg back to the door, and was gone into the pallid night.

It was a couple of days later when the young hillman, still unable to walk without a crutch, but otherwise normal, bethought himself to ask his mother whether she knew of a girl named Minne. For a moment Mis' Briggs looked blank. Then her face lightened.

"WHY, Limpy Louie, he had a gal Minne. 'Twas so long ago I'd most forgot. I was jest a gal myself then. Limpy, he come here from somewheres over Birch Crick way, an' this little gal with him. Her mother had up an' died. Limpy, he worked into the woods round here—both o' his legs was good then—an' he kep' Minne into school. She was awful bright, too, an' awful nice; everybody liked her. Wal, she growed up till she was about eighteen, an' then she run off with a good-lookin' scalawag by name o' Hill that come from nobody knowed where. Her father, he put out after 'em, an' he was gone quite a long while, an' nobody but him knows to this day jest what happened. But when he come back that leg o' hisn was all crooked, an' he wouldn't have nothin' to do with nobody, an' he went way back into the woods an' stayed there, an' he's been so ever sence—jest a wild animil, ye might say.

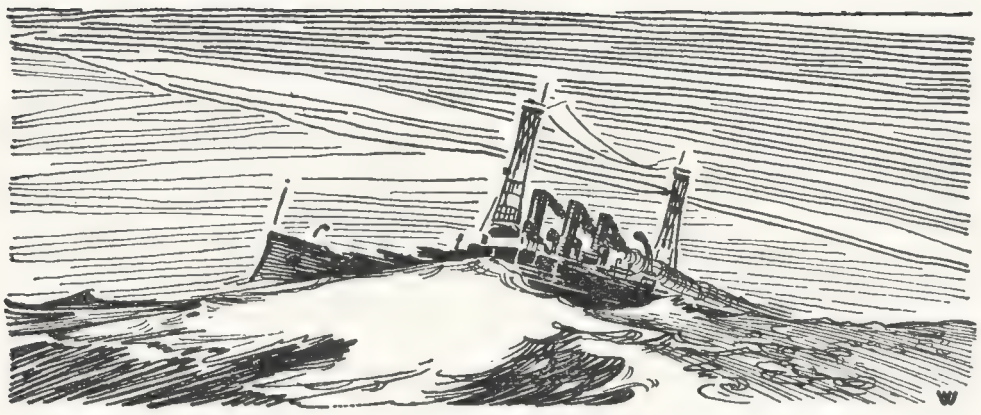
"What ever 'come o' Minne nobody knows. Awful pretty little thing, she was an'— Why, say, she looked somethin' like Faith, here! O' course she was darker complected, but there was somethin'—le's see—the side o' her face looked a good deal the same. An' she had jest the same kind of a quiet, easy way with her, too. Wal, ain't that funny, now!"

Job looked thoughtfully at his wife, then stared even more thoughtfully out of the window. His mother's tongue clattered on, but he hardly heard it. He was reviewing the past few weeks, interpreting certain events from a new angle, sensing something of the lonely heart-hunger of a man who, intensely devoted to a girl like Faith, had lost her.

"Pore ol' coot!" he muttered.

"What ye say?" demanded Mis' Briggs.

"Nothin'. I was jest a-thinkin'. But you an' me, mom, has been a little mite mistook. Injuns, now, they're funny critters, an' ye can't never tell jest what's a-goin' on inside of 'em; but they ain't jest animils. Leastways, some of 'em ain't. An' I guess it don't always pay to jedge folks jest by what ye see onto their outside. Mebbe they're kind of onmannerly, an' mebbe they're kind o' dirty, an' mebbe their hides ain't anyways like ourn. But folks is folks, jest the same."



MADCAP'S MOMENT

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by Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Tlick Lats," "Ze Baby Moonkey," etc.

IT WAS midnight when "Madcap" Buckburn, commander of the big cruiser *Wingham*, en route from Manila to Shanghai, finished reading the long radiogram. He read it by the light of a green-shaded lamp over his head, sitting in a deep chair back in the spacious and elaborately furnished cabin, where the linoleum deck shone like a mirror, and all about on the pea-green bulkheads hung portraits of bygone Naval ships and heroes who had colored the pages of American history. The sea crunched and crashed against the ports along both sides, and the wind from an electric fan rippled the sheet of paper he held.

There was a scowl on his strong, deeply-lined face, which became intensified as he read the message again. A tinge of red mantled his swarthy skin, and a vehement glitter shone in his large dark eyes. Wrought with the injustice of things, as he was just then, he looked all of his fifty-one years.

The preamble of the message he held contained the words, "Seventeen Alnav." It was the Navy Department's annual publication of promotions of officers. The grinning little joker that made Madcap's blood boil lurked in that portion of the message devoted to the enumeration of commanders who had been promoted to the rank of captain. The name Buckburn, which by all the laws of seniority should be there, was not there.

"—— little fatheads," he growled, running a hand through his iron-gray hair. It wasn't fair! There was too much politics in the administration of the Navy!

At length he arose and commenced pacing athwartships, from time to time holding up the message and glaring at it. He was a fine figure of a man, well above medium height, square-shouldered, with a springiness of step and erectness of carriage that belied his years. Presently there came a knock on the door, following which a short, somewhat heavy-set young officer entered. He was the *Wingham's* executive officer, Lieutenant-Commander Warwick.

"Fine, eh?" Madcap's even white teeth gleamed as he held out the message. "See it?"

The younger officer nodded. There was genuine condolence in his look and tone, as he replied:

"I received a copy. I'm sorry, sir."

"I'm not. I'm red-eyed!" Madcap exploded. "What did I tell you yesterday, when we passed this fellow?" He held out the message in his right hand, and with his left forefinger pointed to the typewritten name "Mylan."

The executive officer shook affirmation, recalling Madcap's words of the afternoon before, when the *Wingham* had met the

gunboat *Felena,* Commander Mylan's vessel, bound from Vladivostok down to Manila. Madcap went on:

"I remarked that it wouldn't surprize me if, the next time Mylan and I cross trails, I'll be the one requesting 'permission to proceed.' "

"But what did Mylan ever do, to merit being promoted over senior heads?"

"Sat at a desk in Washington, telling the American people how WE were winning the war," Madcap rasped. "When he tired of that, he branched off into stirring up courts of inquiry." Madcap halted, then whirled like an infuriated panther. "I've got Mylan, no one else, to thank for the investigation of that *Bruton* affair!"

A moment of eye-to-eye silence followed. Then the executive's face brightened.

"But the *Bruton* affair isn't over yet, sir," he said hopefully.

"It's time it was," snapped Madcap. "The thing has been hanging fire for five months—since the armistice was signed!"

"True, sir. But then the wheels of bureaucracy always did move slowly."

"Too —— slowly, Warwick! The findings of that court of inquiry have been sniffed over by every long nose in Washington, and there's no reason why they can't come out flat-foot and state what's what! If I was guilty of unnecessarily hazarding the *Bruton* and the lives of her crew, let it be so stated—before the world, for all I care. Then I'll know where I stand. I can resign and then tell the world my side of the story. If I was *not* guilty—if I did the only thing that *could* be done under the circumstances—then let *that* be so stated, before the same world. And then—on the Q. T. if they'd rather—let them give me what's mine."

Nearing the end of the war Madcap Buckburn, then commanding the destroyer *Bruton,* had performed a feat out in mid-ocean that brought him some immediate newspaper glory, but that later reacted unpleasantly. Steaming along in a heavy fog one day, the *Bruton,* on convoy duty, came suddenly upon a German submarine scarcely two ship-lengths away. Only a small portion of the periscope showed above the surface, and this was fast submerging. There wasn't time to sound general quarters, to get the men at the guns and bring them to bear. There wasn't time to do anything. The *Bruton* carried no depth bombs at the time. At her high rate of speed a very few seconds would have taken her beyond into the dense fog; and before she could have put about and returned, the undersea sneak could have easily submerged to safety. There wasn't time to think. Madcap didn't think. He felt what was necessary, and did it. He jammed both annunciator-handles back to *full speed astern* and, when she lost way, pivoted his ship, by leaving the starboard propeller backing full speed and sending the port one ahead at full speed. He let her swing till she pointed at the periscope, then drove her at it, full speed ahead on both engines.

She cut that submarine in half. The American press was loud and liberal in its praise of the act. So was the Navy Department—at first, when the commander of the convoy made report of the sinking by radio. But, for obvious reasons, this report did not state the extent of the *Bruton's* damages. Days later, when the long, lean little craft lumbered slowly into Hampton Roads, she was bow-bent, warped and lopsided, some of her forward plates having been stove in; her towering forecastle was weighted down almost flush with the waterline, by her forward compartments which were filled with water and closed off from the rest of the ship by water-tight doors.

Then had begun the fun for Madcap Buckburn. Some one in the Navy Department saw an opportunity to settle an old score with Madcap. That some one was Commander Mylan.

Madcap knew, though no one had told him, that he had Mylan to thank for the instigation of that court of inquiry. It could be no one else; he knew of no other enemy in the service. It was not a question merely of fixing the blame on some one and thus preventing some Madcap the Second from performing another such costly feat; because the war was over by the time that court of inquiry was designated. Indeed no. It was purely an act of retaliation on Mylan's part, retaliation for that affair of twenty years ago—a court martial controversy between Madcap and Mylan over a boiler explosion on one of the old battleships, which had resulted in Mylan's losing several numbers, thus rendering Madcap his senior. That was it. In stirring up the *Bruton* investigation, Mylan was essaying to win back that lost notch of seniority between Madcap and himself. And it looked

as if he had made good; for while he, Mylan was being advanced automatically along with the rest annually promoted, Madcap's promotion was being held in abeyance pending the outcome of the court of inquiry.

TROUBLE never robbed Madcap Buckburn of his sleep. His was that perfect coordination of nerve and muscle and brain that, with luck helping, makes some men masters of others. The instant his iron-gray hair touched the pillow that early morning Madcap put aside his mental turmoil, along with all thought of the brewing storm without—the black sky, the snarling wind, the rising sea and the falling barometer. He lay down at 1:45, and at 1:46 was in the profounds of nothingness.

But not for many minutes did he remain in that blissful state. At two o'clock there came a rap on the door of his stateroom. With a growl Madcap sat up and switched on the overhead light.

"Message from the *Felena*, sir," said the marine orderly, entering.

"From the *Felena!*" Madcap flashed him a look of indignant wrath. "Wouldn't it keep till morning?"

"No, sir. The officer of the deck says to wake you, sir."

"The long-eared jackass," growled Madcap, meaning, not his own officer of the deck, but the commanding officer of the gunboat *Felena*, his friend Mylan. "Showing his teeth already, eh? No sooner promoted than he's—"

Madcap stopped, glowering blackly at the message. He read:

U. S. S. *Wingham*. *Felena* grounded on sand-bar north of Tamsui, Formosa. Proceed immediately to assistance. Rush. Acknowledge.

"Tamsui! How in blue blazes did he ever get in there!" Madcap exclaimed, as he swung his feet over the edge of the bunk and stepped into his slippers. There was a peculiar light in his dark eyes, and his teeth gleamed with the iridescence of pearls. It might have been a look of glad satisfaction, triumph. Perhaps in that moment he did exult in his hostile brother officer's misfortune. He had ample cause.

However, this was no time to stand on personal feelings.

"Orderly," he snapped to the marine, "first, jump out in the cabin there and call the bridge on the voice-tube. Tell the officer of the deck to change course to south. Also tell him to jingle the engine-room for all the speed they've got steam for. Then shake out the chief engineer officer, and tell him to get his huskies busy; that the Old Man wants steam for every kick her propellers'll deliver. On the jump! Then wake the navigator, give him this message and tell him to gallop up to the chart-house and lay out our new course. Got it?"

"Yes, sir. Aye, aye, sir. I'm movin', sir."

And that marine must have moved. For before Madcap could don coat and trousers, the ship was heeling heavily over to starboard, as she responded to the full helm and swerved round to the new course.

There was a grin on his dark, handsome face, as he lurched out of his stateroom into the cabin. For, aside from the gravity of things, the situation had its humorous phase. A ship grounded on a sand-bar was nothing to laugh at. Madcap wasn't grinning at that. He was grinning at what the chair-warmers in Washington would say when they learned that their petted pet had slipped. The ultra-cautious, the infallible Mylan aground off Formosa! What a sour cud for those little fat ones to ruminate on and twiddle their thumbs over!

Leaving the cabin, Madcap went staggering forward along a narrow and dimly lighted passageway. He had to put out his hands against the cold steel bulkheads to steady himself, for the big cruiser was rolling heavily now; the change of course had brought her broadside to the onslaught of wind and wave. He arrived at the foot of a ladder leading up through a hatch opening on the quarter-deck. Grasping the manrope, he ascended. The overhead roar of rushing water, and with it a cold slap of spray in his face, told him that she was shipping seas over the quarter-deck. He was aware that the speed of the ship had been greatly increased; she quivered, vibrated, and the dull, distant piston-throbs had accelerated perceptibly.

It was a wild and weathery night. Madcap emerged on the port side of the quarter-deck to a deafening roar of wind and swirling shipped seas and black sky. She was rising from a heavy lay-over to port. For a moment he waited, clinging to the manrope, debating the advisability of ducking back below till this one swept over. These after hatches would have to be battened

down, was his thought. Then up she rose and over she lay to starboard, the water she had dipped up roaring thunderously across the deck, seething and boiling and brimming over the hatch-coamings about him, drenching him to the skin. Then he saw his chance. As she heeled far over to starboard, Madcap took a hop-skip-and-jump that fetched him up half-way up the ladder forward that led up to the superstructure deck, or topside.

Through the cold, driving spindrift that swept over the topside he staggered forward to the chart-house. Looking in through a window, he saw the navigating officer, Lieutenant Strommet, bending over the broad, highly polished desk consulting a chart, dressed in only his pajamas, a pair of dividers in one hand and the parallel ruler in the other. He looked up quickly at Madcap's tap on the window.

"I'll have our course laid out in a minute, sir." Lieutenant Strommet had to shout to make himself heard above the snarl and hiss of wind and spray.

Madcap nodded and passed on to the bridge-ladder, just forward of the chart-house. Mounting to the bridge, he was greeted by the executive officer. Lieutenant-Commander Warwick was hatless, attired in a long rubber coat and slippers. From up on the flying-bridge, at the standard compass, came the voice of the officer of the deck, as he conned the helmsman.

"What's the speed, Warwick?" questioned Madcap.

"Eighteen knots, sir. Picking up rapidly."

A jump and a half behind Madcap, the navigator ascended the bridge-ladder, shouting for the officer of the deck.

"Up here, sir," responded that official from the flying-bridge.

"Here's your new course, per standard compass," the navigator called up. "One—seven—six. Got it?"

"One seventy-six," repeated the officer of the deck. Then he went about checking up with the helmsman—that is, determining the new course by steering compass, which, due to the magnetic influence of the iron and steel in the forward turret and guns, differed considerably from the standard compass.

Madcap went out on the port bridge-wing, with Lieutenant-Commander Warwick at his shoulder, saying in his ear—

"Better take the lee wing, Captain."

MADCAP only grunted. He continued on out to the weather rail, over which he hung, facing forward, looking down upon the foam-smothered forecastle. She was shipping more water forward than aft. Running in the trough, on a course parallel to those long rolling mountains of water, she was getting it going and coming. She rose and fell like a wooden bucket in a cataract—now riding high and serene on the giddy height of a watery crest, the next moment tobogganing sidewise down the side of it to the yawning valley beyond. Her bow end went down faster than did her stern end, so that she terminated each swift downward ride by plunging her gigantic nose deep into it, dipping up hundreds of tons of seething water that went roaring aft across the deck, as she reared up, and cascaded over the sides. And with each of those thunderous impacts of her diving bow she tossed up a dense spume of spray that swept like a cloudburst over the bridge and topside, drenching everything and everybody.

Hanging there over the rail in the dark, Madcap looked as forlorn as an all but drowned rat. But he felt like something vastly different from that. There was something whimsical in the peculiarly coincidental nature of this night's developments that appealed strongly to his highly whimsical temperament. It was one of those ironical jokes fate plays in the lives of men, wherein the tables are turned and the "goat" gets the last laugh. The shoe was on the other foot. He, Madcap, was laughing now. Indeed he was laughing. His whole being was welling up and brimming over with the thought that he was chasing southward four bells and a jingle *to pull Mylan off a sand-bar.* Mylan!—the prime-mover and wire-puller of that court of inquiry that had kept the name Buckburn off of Seventeen Alnav.

"I thought Mylan was running down the east coast of Formosa," chattered Lieutenant-Commander Warwick at his side.

"So did I," Madcap returned. "That's the way he was headed when we met him yesterday."

Both ducked down behind the bridge-screen to escape a shower of spray.

"Probably changed his mind, when this blow came up," the executive continued, "and decided on Formosa Strait. That would give him the lee of the island."

"Yes," Madcap growled. He leaned over toward his subordinate and added, "Mylan is a wizard at that trick, Warwick."

"The trick of changing his mind, sir?"

"Um-m-m—yes. Scudding for the lee when things get rough."

The lieutenant-commander readily comprehended the skipper's vague figure of speech. He had his personal feelings, in this matter of strained relations between Madcap and Mylan, and they were wholly with Madcap Buckburn.

"It's an outrage, skipper! Poo-ey!" he spat out a mouthful of salt water, then ducked down too late. "It's a —— shame, promoting him over a dozen senior heads! What did he ever do!"

"Do? Mylan?" Madcap laughed a wild laugh into the wind and spray. "He scudded for the lee, Warwick, when things got rough. Pulled the wires for a desk in the department, where he could sit down and win the war without wetting his feet.

"Did you ever read that article he wrote? 'Behind the Blazing Guns,' he called it. It was good, no question about that, Warwick. Mylan had local color galore and gorgeous. You'd swear the —— thing was written on board a destroyer going ——'s bells ahead at a submarine, ready to drop her depth egg. Had his picture printed at the head of it, too—wild-eyed, hair flying in the wind, leaning far out over the bridge-wing rail. Hy-ho. Poo-ey!"

Another dark form staggered out on the wing and joined them. It was the chief engineer.

"Captain," he reported, "I've got my heavy boys on the fires, and we're raising steam all the time. We're doing better than eighteen knots now. In a half hour we'll be kicking out our full twenty-six, sir."

"Good enough, Chief," Madcap answered. He turned to the executive. "Two hundred miles. We ought to make it at ten o'clock. How about the tide, off Tamsui?"

"I've looked it up, sir," the executive answered. "It's on the flood down there now. From Mylan's message I take it that the *Felena* beached at about low slack water. We should get there at about high slack water, sir."

"Chances are the tide 'll float her off by then." Madcap was silent for a moment. Then he turned and started inboard. "I think I'll go down to the radio-office, Warwick," he flung back, "and hold a little chin-fest through the air with *Captain* Mylan."

AFTER descending three ladders to the gun-deck, Madcap walked aft to the radio office, amidships. Entering, he found the radio operator, one "Sparks" Wilson, cramped tensely over the desk, one arm crooked up over his head so that he could press both 'phones tightly against his ears, and with the other hand writing on a pad. A glance at the preamble, scrawled across the top of the sheet, told Madcap that his top-notch long-distance operator—which Hastings was—was tuned in on and copying from Honolulu, from the naval station at Pearl Harbor, Oahu.

"Cut that, lad," Madcap broke in on him. "Never mind about intercepting any dope this morning. It's good work, copying Pearl Harbor from here, and I fully appreciate it. But we're proceeding to a ship in distress. I want you to keep tuned in on the *Felena*."

Wilson sat up and reluctantly dropped his pencil.

"But I don't have to tune to hear the *Felena*, sir," he spoke up in vindication. "She comes in all over the set, sir. I could hear the *Felena's* spark, if she should open up, while I'm copying Honolulu's arc."

"Could, eh? How do you know you could?"

"Because she came in loud before, sir, when she sent me that rush message, while I was copying Pearl Harbor."

"Uh-huh." Madcap picked up the stack of messages Wilson had intercepted. "Is any of this for us?"

"One, sir. It's in code," Wilson answered, and then sat there blinking his disappointment at the Old Man's interruption. Static was wishing the old boy would get out. Pearl Harbor had been coming in good, and he had had hopes of making a clean sweep. This was the practise. Pearl Harbor sent all departmental radio communication to the station at Cavite in the Philippines; and Cavite broadcast it to the Asiatic ships. But the wide-awake operators in the widely separated ships of the Asiatic Fleet usually listened in on Pearl Harbor and, when atmospheric conditions were good, got the business beforehand.

Madcap picked out the message addressed "Govt. U. S. S. *Wingham*." He noted that

it was from the Bureau of Navigation. But the rest of it was in four-letter code groups, hence unintelligible. Some unimportant routine business, he thought, and stuffed it into his wet coat-pocket.

Just then Sparks Wilson jerked up in his chair, with one hand reaching out quickly to the receiving-set to make an adjustment.

"Here's the *Felena* in now, sir," he announced, pushing the remote control button, thus starting the motor-generator. He clamped down the antenna-transfer switch, disconnecting the receiver and connecting the transmitter with the aerial. Then his hand danced up and down on the key making the quenched spark-gap sing a high-frequency song of dots and dashes which meant, "*Felena*, go ahead."

He swung round to the typewriter, and commenced punching off the message. Looking down over his shoulder Madcap read:

Govt. U. S. S. *Wingham*.
Rush. Report immediately your speed and probable arrival.

"The—— back-slapper," Madcap growled. Wilson grinned, cut in his transmitter and began pounding the key in acknowledgment. "Hold him up, lad," Madcap added.

After making the conventional A. S., meaning "Stand by," Wilson waited, while Madcap bent over the desk and wrote his reply. Then he began sending it.

Govt. U. S. S. *Felena*.
Twenty-six knots. Ten o'clock.
Are you seriously damaged?

Mylan's reply was short and sweet.

No.

Just for the fun of the thing Madcap had Wilson send another message, in which he requested "full particulars attending the beaching of the *Felena*." To this Captain Mylan made no reply. His next message to the *Wingham* pertained not to the *Felena* at all. It was long, pompously worded and lordly in tone. In it Madcap Buckburn's attention was invited to certain pages and paragraphs in the book of Navy regulations, wherein, the message stated, the subject of seniority, with regard to ships in close proximity at sea, was fully covered. Finally, Madcap was peremptorily commanded to expend less energy in the *Wingham's* radio antenna, and to put more in the thrust of her propellers.

Having acknowledged, Wilson sat there waiting for the skipper's word. Madcap was grinning broadly.

"All right, lad," he said finally. "I guess that's that. I'd like to shoot back and tell him a few things. But he's the Big Noise now, and I suppose we'll have to do as he says."

As he went out, to return to the bridge, he added—

"The —— back-slapper."

SOUTHWARD, like a hound after a rabbit, galloped the big cruiser, her long leaps and bounds carrying her over the watery crests and hollows at a rate of speed she had not moved in many a day. She quivered in every atom of her, like some wild, maniacal thing of life, as rolling, pitching, tumbling, she plunged over the sea and burrowed through it. Out of her four stacks she spewed up an enormous column of dense black smoke, with now and then a sprinkling of red sparks. The bridge-deck gratings clattered under Madcap's feet, so heavy was the vibration of her, as from out on the lee wing he watched the gray of dawn break over the wild, billowy waste.

At seven o'clock Madcap went below to his cabin to breakfast. Then for the first time he bethought him of the Department's code message that Hastings had intercepted from Pearl Harbor. He took it from his coat pocket and gave it to his Filipino steward, saying:

"Rizal, tell my orderly to take this to my yeoman and tell him to decode it. No hurry; tell him bime-by."

Nearing nine o'clock the lookout in the fore-top buzzed the bridge and shouted down through the voice-tube:

"Land ho! Broad off the port bow!"

Soon the northern coast of Formosa could be seen from the bridge—a ragged black line where sea and sky met; and rapidly it took on detail, showing here and there points and waves. And now, in steadily increasing number, seagulls could be seen battling in the offshore wind, which had veered considerably to the northward, on their way out to meet the inbound ship. Due to the breaking of the wind by the island's northern extremity, the state of the sea had changed; it was now choppy-rough, more greenish, and specked with white-caps and curlers to every compass point of the horizon. The air was thick and sticky with

mist and spray blown off the waves. The sun was taking a day off.

Like so many monkeys, the *Wingham's* gobs ran up both caged masts to the fighting-tops, searchlight platforms and yard-arms. A score or more sighted the grounded *Felena* and raised voice at once. At which the officer of the deck buzzed the engine-room and through the voice-tube shouted:

"We'll be slowing down soon. Handle your fires accordingly." He turned and called the boatswain's mate below the bridge.

"Leadsmen in both chains," he commanded. "Stand by to anchor."

The foam- and spray-swept forecastle became a scene of lively activity. Far up forward in the dancing bow, up between the ship's eyes, in the boil and smother of shipped seas, square-shouldered and lithe-limbed seamen leaped and danced about like so many boys sporting in a surf, getting the stoppers off and the anchor ready for letting go. Little did they realize the imminent peril of being washed overboard. In such moments the American bluejacket splits his chances fifty-fifty with Uncle Sam—"One arm for m'self an' one for the Government." With the agility and certitude of cats, they sprang to obey the bull-lunged commands of the chief boatswain, who himself performed feats of nerve and muscle that well might have inspired a circus acrobat.

Aft a ways, in the portable platforms rigged outboard of the rails, the "chains," two seamen, one on the port side and one on the starboard, made lusty and herculean efforts to heave their heavy leads far enough ahead of the ship to enable them to get soundings; but so great was the speed of the ship, and so choppy the sea, that the best either of them could do was to sink his lead to three fathoms of the line. After several futile attempts both quit and just clung there, the spray showering over them, glaring rage and defiance up at the bridge.

"Just stand by, lads," Madcap shouted down through a megaphone. "We'll slow down in a few minutes."

As the grounded gunboat ahead loomed up in sharper detail, it was observed that her bow was high out of the water and her masts tilted at considerable of an angle. Her nose end was fast in the sand-bar. That she was making frantic efforts to back off of it was patent from the white commotion of water churned up under her stern end. A long stream of black smoke trailed away from her stacks to the southern horizon.

A mile in the offing to the westward, a tramp steamer was standing by, but making no move to run in and get over a line to the stricken man-of-war. Nor could her captain be blamed; for the chart showed that this section of water was shallow for a goodly distance offshore.

"Whatever possessed Mylan to get in so close!" exclaimed the executive officer in Madcap's ear.

"He was taking a short cut," Madcap answered, grinning. Then sobering, "Better take it easy now, Warwick. There's none too much water in here." Turning, he shouted to the four signalmen grouped outboard on the port wing, "Watch her for signals now, lads."

With the exhaust valve up on the forward stack hissing loudly, the *Wingham* slowed down to five knots. The two seamen in the chains resumed heaving their leads.

"No bottom at nine!" shouted the one to starboard—meaning that he had sunk his lead to nine fathoms of the line without its touching bottom.

"By the dee-ee-ep eight!" shrieked the man in the port chains, his falsetto triumphant at being first to fetch bottom.

"By the mark seven!" the starboard man shot back at him a moment later.

Then both wound up, hove, paid out their lines, and simultaneously shouted:

"And a quarter five!" "By the mark five!"

"Stop the engine!" the executive officer snapped to the seaman at the speed-annunciator. He added, "Rudder amidships. A kick astern."

With not many feet between her keel and the bottom, the big cruiser lay dead in the water. Less than a mile to the southward lay the *Felena*, the forward end of her keel buried in sand, the water about her after end frothing under her backing propeller. In addition to this her crew were attempting to warp her off; she had two kedge-anchors out, one tending off each quarter, and was maintaining a strain on both chains.

"*Felena's* flying the S. O. P. pennant, sir," reported the signalman in charge—meaning the small blue triangular pennant displayed at the gunboat's main starboard yard-arm, whereby she signified that her commanding

officer was senior officer present. Captain Mylan was not slow to emblazon his badge of command to the watery world at large. He was the Big Noise, Boss Afloat, despite that he was aground, and he wanted the whole cock-eyed world to know it! He wanted Madcap Buckburn in particular to know it.

The *Wingham's* call letters, hoisted half way, were now flying from the *Felena's* yard-arm. Thus she made known that she had a message to send by semaphore. In response, the *Wingham's* signalmen ran the answering pennant half-way up. Then one of them trained a long glass on the signalman flourishing the semaphore flags from the gunboat's bridge and began calling the message out, while another wrote it down.

IN THE matter of assuming command, Captain Mylan was very much up to snuff. His message ran:

Bear a hand. Take advantage of flood tide. Come in as near as your draft and depth of water will allow, then anchor with shortest length of chain practicable, maintaining full head of steam.

When anchored, lower your whaleboat and send over a small line of sufficient length; this to be bent to our towing-hawser. Expedite.

In reply to which Madcap had his signalmen semaphore:

Suggest both ships send whaleboats, each carrying small line, these to be joined when boats meet midway between us.

The suggestion contained one hundred per cent. of common sense. But to the haughty and aristocratic mind of Captain Mylan, common sense was a vain and empty term. It might be that he thought himself a god. His reply was a superimposed command.

Carry out your orders.

Five minutes passed, during which Madcap was below in the chart-house studying the depths of water marked on the chart. Chafing under this delay, Mylan signaled further:

What are you waiting for?

Lieutenant-Commander Warwick brought the message down to the chart-house. Madcap took it, read it, then let it fall to the deck.

"Look here, Warwick," he said, pointing to the tiny cross on the chart which indicated the *Felena's* position. "We couldn't get within a mile of her from this side, unless we emptied our coal bunkers. We're drawing too much water. See here?" With a pencil point on the chart he traced over the area of water to the north of where the *Felena* was grounded. "Here's the bar she's grounded on. Here we are. Look at these depths of water marked down. Every square foot of water to the north and west of that sand-bar is shallow. But look how abruptly it grows deeper to the south of it—six fathoms here—seven here—five and a half here—"

The executive officer nodded and said—

"You think we'd better swing around to seaward, sir, swerve round and come up to the south of her?"

"Sure thing. We can run around and come up to within a few hundred yards of her." Madcap made a tiny triangle on the chart, the apex of which pointed to the cross that marked the grounded ship's position. "There's a small area of water right there that we can nose up into just as nicely as you please. It would take us two hours to get a line to her from this side of that bar, and by then the tide will be on the ebb. It's going to be —— tough work carrying a line in a whaleboat through such a choppy sea as this! On the other hand we can scud around to the south and come up to her within a half hour, shoot her a line—"

"But then, sir," the lieutenant-commander smiled, "then we'll not be in a position to tow her back off the bar."

"I don't purpose to tow her back off." Madcap paused a moment, his fiery dark eyes boring into the other. "I'm going to tow her *right on over it.*"

"Tow her over the bar, sir?"

"Yes. Not *under* it, Warwick," Madcap added dryly.

"But we'll only bury her deeper in the sand, sir!"

"Think so? I don't. At any rate, we'll follow regulations and carry out our last order. He said to come in as near as our draft and the depth will allow, eh? Very well. He didn't indicate our direction of approach, so we'll go right ahead at our own discretion. Jump up on the bridge, Warwick, and take the deck. Head her west, and circle slowly southward."

When his executive officer had left him, Madcap stood pondering a moment. Suddenly his roving eyes came to rest on

something that fitted right in with what he already had in mind with regard to sending that line over to the grounded gunboat. It was nothing more than a waste-paper basket. But the interesting thing about this waste-paper basket was that it was of *wire*. Madcap looked at it for a full minute. Then he called in his orderly, and said—

"Go tell Gunner Smith I want to see him."

Madcap then quitted the charthouse. Mounting the bridge, he returned to the starboard wing. The signalmen were busy out on the port wing, receiving another message from the *Felena*. The *Wingham* was under way again, scudding southwest ahead of the wind, the smoke from her stacks hovering over her like a dense black cloud.

"Oh, Richards!" Madcap shouted through a megaphone to the old bull-lunged chief boatswain down on the forecastle, who held up a hand in acknowledgment. "Break out a line, Richards—something small—heavy heaving-line 'll do—about a hundred and fifty fathoms. Got that?"

"Aye, aye, sir," came the lusty response. He said something to two seamen close by, at which they both went galloping aft. Then the old chief warrant officer came aft, his hands cupped over his mouth through which he shouted up to the bridge:

"Do I get you right, sir? Is this to be the same stunt we pulled that time off San Diego, on the old *Walabaloo?*"

"Righto!" Madcap snapped affirmation. "You've got me, Richards."

"So have I, sir," chimed in a voice at Madcap's elbow. Turning, he grinned into another old-timer's face that grinned back at him. It was old Gunner Smith.

"Hello, Smith!" Madcap's eyes blazed with boyish fire. "Say, history repeats! —— if here ain't the three of us—you, Richards and I! Smith, remember what the chair-warmers said when the *Walabaloo* pulled the Mexican filibuster off the rocks? A fluke, eh? Smith, we're going to show 'em that some men specialize in flukes!"

One of the signal boys interrupted to report another message from the *Felena*. Madcap read:

Where are you going?
My order was to come in and send over a line.

Madcap's reply was:

I am carrying out that order.

MADCAP now became a busy skipper. Every one wanted to talk to him at once. From up on the flying-bridge Lieutenant-Commander Warwick was bidding for his attention, while from below on the forecastle Boatswain Richards was doing the same thing. A little way inboard a thin, sallow-faced little chief yeoman was making frantic effort to plow through the congestion of signal boys, bugler, orderly and junior officer of the deck and get to the skipper. And in Madcap's inboard ear Gunner Smith was saying:

"I'll have the wire net made and rigged right away, sir. Which gun are we going to fire, sir?"

"Why, one of the after six-inch guns, Smith," Madcap answered. "Never mind the wire net, Smith. There's a wire waste basket down in the charthouse. It'll just fit over the muzzle of the gun. Take that."

He turned and shouted up to the flying-bridge:

"That's well, Warwick. Steady as you go."

"I say, Captain," Boatswain Richards bellowed from below, "are you gonna shoot that line from forrid or aft?"

"Aft, Richards, aft," answered Madcap, then turned and started inboard, shouting, "Gangway!" to those blocking his way.

And, with one exception, they gave unto him gangway. The one exception was that thin and cadaverous little chief yeoman—Madcap's writer, one Elmer Dixon. He stood at the foot of the ladder leading up to the flying-bridge, holding up a large sheet of paper.

"Don't bother me now, Dixon," Madcap snapped. "No time for routine business now. *Gangway*, doggone it!"

Dixon sidestepped.

"It's that intercepted message from Pearl Harbor, sir, that you sent me to decode."

"To —— with it!" And Madcap shot past him and up the flying-bridge ladder.

"You won't say so when you read it, sir!" Dixon flung up after him. "It's pretty big stuff, sir. It's—"

But Elmer Dixon was talking to the wind.

"I'll take the deck, Warwick," announced the skipper to his executive officer. He turned and with a sweeping glance took in the wild white-and-gray seascape to the south, west and north, and the low fringe of

black to the east, the shoreline. The *Felena* was now two miles to the north.

"Let me know when she's abeam of us," Madcap shouted down to the junior officer of the deck. And to the helmsman, "Stand by to bring her over sharply, lad." Then he called down to the signalmen:

"Signal the *Felena*. 'Request permission to fire our Number Seven six-inch gun.' "

A few moments later the junior officer of the deck shouted—

"*Felena's* dead abeam, sir!"

"Full left rudder!" Madcap commanded.

"Full left, sir," the helmsman repeated, and spun the wheel.

Far over to starboard she lay, as rapidly her nose end swung round to port under the full rudder.

"Ease 'er, lad," Madcap shouted.

"Ease 'er, sir."

Still she swung. She was pointing into the wind now. The *Felena* was bearing broad off the port bow.

"How's the rudder?"

"'Midships, sir."

"Meet 'er!"

"Meet 'er, sir!"

She stopped swinging, pointing at the grounded gunboat two miles to the windward.

"Steady as you go!" Madcap finished the maneuver.

With her cutwater cleaving up flaring white wings before her towering bows the big cruiser bore up to the northward toward the grounded gunboat. She may have looked like a fool plunging to destruction. But Madcap Buckburn knew where he was and, what was more important, where he was going. When within a mile of the *Felena* he slowed his ship to two-thirds speed.

THE *Wingham's* gobs were now spread out along both starboard and port rails, from the bridge back to the stern end. They were wrapping that long length of small line in bights about the ship's after half, passing it outboard, clear of everything, hanging it loosely along the rails so that it was clear for running. There were four bights, two on each side, reaching forward to the bridge. Thus: Beginning from the quarter-deck, the line led forward along the port side to the bridge, was there doubled and brought aft, passed round the stern end and then forward along the starboard side to the bridge, then doubled, brought back and around again— To its bitter end was made fast that wire waste-paper basket. The wire basket was clamped over the muzzle of the after six-inch gun on the port side, No. 7.

Less than a half mile from the bar on which the *Felena* was stranded, Madcap slowed his ship to one-third speed. A few moments later he stopped her, and ordered full right rudder—which is hard a-port the world around, except in the U. S. Navy.

She swung around slowly, drifting out her momentum. With a "kick astern" and the helm shifted, she stopped dead in the water, her port quarter toward the *Felena*, who lay bow-to, less than five hundred yards distant.

"How much water now?" Madcap megaphoned to the leadsmen.

"A quarter less five, sir," came the answers from both sides.

Number Seven gun's crew was now called to quarters. They came galloping. The big gun was manned, loaded, and elevated so that its muzzle, over which was the wire waste-paper basket with the end of the line attached to it, pointed skyward over the *Felena's* quarter-deck, the latter ship lying obliquely in a northeast and southwest line.

"How about a reply to that request?" Madcap called down to the signalman in charge.

"No reply yet, sir."

"Then send it again," Madcap ordered grimly. " 'Request permission to fire Number Seven six-inch gun.' "

A few moments' wait, and then came Captain Mylan's reply:

Not granted. The senior officer present does not deem this an occasion for spectacular and harebrained display. Your present duty is neither target practise nor shooting-life-buoy drill. Carry out my order. Send whaleboat with line at once.

There was red in Madcap's eyes when he read it. He commenced doing the caged-lion walk athwartships across the flying-bridge, his head thrust forward in bellicose attitude, his eyes narrow with glittering rage, his jaw set.

"—— it all!" he snarled, whirling to face Lieutenant-Commander Warwick who, at the head of the ladder, was bending over and giving eager ear to what the little chief yeoman, Dixon, was saying. "I say, Warwick!" Madcap roared.

"Yes, sir," the executive responded. "Wait a moment, Dixon," he said in an aside to the yeoman, and then danced over to Madcap's side.

"Doggone it, Warwick, it's not up to us to send a boat! We're the lee ship! Look—" With a sweeping gesture he indicated the wild, white-capped area of water between the two ships. "It'd take our boat an hour to work up against that wind and sea! By then the tide 'll be on the ebb, and there won't be a chance in a hundred of towing her off!"

"It's high slack water now, sir," the executive put in. "Why, she's all but afloat now, sir."

Which was so. The *Felena's* masts no longer canted but stood up perpendicularly. Her list to starboard was scarcely noticeable.

"All she needs is a yank ahead," Madcap growled. "If that —— fool would stop trying to back off and *go ahead full speed*, she'd be off in a wink. He doesn't know his ship. That ship has the pushing power of a dreadnaught—but she won't back for sour apples. ——. Oh well," he broke off, "I suppose to save myself from official ostracism I'll have to—" He bawled down to the officer of the deck, "Man the starboard whaleboat!"

Lieutenant-Commander Warwick had returned over to the head of the ladder, where he again bent over and listened to Dixon the yeoman. Dixon was reading him the decoded text of the radiogram Hastings had intercepted the night before from Pearl Harbor. When he had finished, the executive officer was as a man charged with new life. He snatched away the message.

"Tell the chief quartermaster!" he snapped in Dixon's ear. "Tell him to bear a hand and hoist that flag! On the jump!"

Dixon went stumbling down the ladder. The executive turned and faced Madcap. There was a wild light in the junior officer's eyes. But Madcap appeared not to see him. The skipper's glaring eyes were on the whaleboat, back amidships on the starboard side, into which a half-dozen seamen were scrambling. The gripes were off and the boat was being swung outboard.

"Lower away!" Madcap shouted.

"Belay that!" the executive officer countermanded the order.

Every one looked foolish. All over the bridge and top-side were grinning upturned faces. It was a thing unheard of—the captain and the executive, almost in the same breath, shouting conflicting orders. The coxswain of the whaleboat, knowing his Bluejacket's Bible, obeyed his last order.

"Keep fast them falls!" he snapped to the men about to lower away at the boat-falls. Out over the side the boat swung giddily from its davits with the ship's motion, her crew shivering and chattering on the thwarts, unanimously hoping the last order would stand; for not a man of them had any hankering to get out there and do battle in that rough and icy sea. Up in the boat's bow a youth of tender age with a soprano voice of wonderful range and volume warbled—

Rock-a-bye baby in the tree-top.

"Ditch it, ditch it!" the coxswain squelched him. Whereupon another, with a voice of foghorn depth and sonorousness, gave voice to—

Many brave hearts lie asleep in the deep—

"Knock it off!" barked the coxswain.

Up on the wing of the flying-bridge Madcap was reading from a sheet of paper which the executive officer had handed to him. As he read his dark scowl gave way to a grin, and the grin to a leer. When he finished he turned and faced aft, his head and shoulders well back, glaring triumphant defiance at the bridge of the ship over the water. The open-mouthed gobs on the top-side saw Lieutenant-Commander Warwick salute and, with a smile and a nod, utter something. Madcap returned the salute and grinned. The two shook hands.

Below them, on the starboard wing of the bridge proper, now appeared a short, stocky chief quartermaster. He carried a thick roll of dark-blue bunting. Unhooking a signal halyard, he snapped the hook on its end to a metal ring attached to the roll of blue bunting. Now, also bending the tail of the halyard to the rolled flag, he laid a loop or bight along its length and over this wound several turns, finishing with a cinching tuck, thus rendering the flag "ready for breaking." And thus he slowly hoisted it, rolled up, to the yard-arm. Then turning, facing inboard and upward toward Madcap on the flying-bridge, he saluted and announced—

"Senior officer present's pennant ready to break, sir."

MADCAP was holding his binoculars trained on his unbrotherly brother officer over on the port bridge-wing of the *Felena*. By carefully adjusting the glasses he brought that sneering, snobbish face into sharply focused detail. As if from only a few yards away, Madcap caught the gleam of malign hatred, the intense, insatiable venom in those greenish, bulging eyes. They were the treacherous eyes of a cat. The nose was thin, sharp-pointed, beak-like, with a hump high on the bridge, and wide, flaring nostrils; the lips thin, drooping at the ends.

Mylan stood there like a statue, drawn up to the full of his slim six feet of vain, supercilious lordliness, his head far back so that his hooked nose pointed over the heads of those on the *Wingham's* bridge, his disdain-sniffing nostrils quivering, like the deified being he *thought* he was—a lord of the seas, a god, before whom let the whole cockeyed world tremble or take the consequences!

Small matter to Captain Mylan that he had grounded a ship. That was mere bagatelle. There were gods in Washington, with whom he stood in soft, who would quickly absolve him from that. He had only to submit his official report, in which he could adroitly "pass the buck", so to speak, that is, wiggle out from under the blame and shift the weight of it on to some of his subordinates' shoulders. Fiddlesticks! The chair-warmers would see him through. It was of no account at all. All that counted or mattered with Captain Mylan just then was that he was Senior Officer Present, Boss Afloat; that he was the wearer of the iron heel, and Madcap Buckburn was the under dog.

Little recked Captain Mylan the rapidity with which a shoe can sometimes be shifted onto some one's else foot. Training his binoculars over on the *Wingham's* flying-bridge, he noted that Madcap held something white in his hand. Little did Mylan dream that it was Madcap's moment, not his; that in that fluttering sheet of paper Madcap held the highest trump dealt that day.

Mylan now saw Madcap turn and shout something down to a short, heavy-set chief quartermaster, who stood on the lower starboard bridge-wing holding the down-haul of a signal halyard—the halyard on which that roll of blue bunting was hoisted to the yard-arm. The chief quartermaster nodded up to Madcap, then gave a jerk on the down-haul, thus releasing the rolled-up dark-blue pennant to the wind.

"*Wingham's* flying the S. O. P. pennant, sir!" shouted a *Felena* signalman.

Then *bloo-ey!* With a red blaze and a puff of smoke the *Wingham's* big Number Seven roared. A six-inch shell went screeching high over the *Felena*. But the thing about this shell was that it was traveling in company. When it left the muzzle of the gun that shell embedded itself in the wire waste-paper basket to which was attached the end of that two hundred fathoms of small line. The overhead screech was followed by a long streak of black, as the line shot upward and away through space.

It shot across the gray-black sky with the rapidity of a streak of lightning. Then down it came, as the wire basket and the shell that carried it through space parted company, the basket, yanked back by the long line whose other end was fast on the *Wingham's* quarterdeck, to fall into the sea, the shell to soar on to no one knows where. The line came down across the *Felena's* radio antenna.

Captain Mylan turned ghastly with rage. Like two green balls of fire his eyes blazed and bulged, till they appeared about to pop out of their sockets. He wiggled and squirmed as with a bee in his pants, dancing this way and that, his fingers clawing the air, his face a funny complex of wrathful eyes and teeth and twitching lips through which he snarled and spluttered noises that no one could understand.

Madcap had done it, done it, done it again! Another of his hare-brained flukes! The lucky pup!

"Silence!" Mylan roared, at the spontaneous cheer that rose from his men below. "Don't take that line!" he bellowed at the exodus of gobs toward that point amidships on the port side over which the line hung down from the antenna to the water. "Don't take it, I say! Cast it adrift! Adrift with it! Heave it overboard, —— it, overboard!"

He turned and bawled across the bridge: "Signal boy! Signal boy!"

A youngster came galloping. With the lad at his heels, inboard and outboard Mylan hula-hulaed and hootchey-kootcheyed, like a man who couldn't stand the smell of himself and was trying to get away from himself.

"Ask the *Wingham* on whose authority she hoists the S. O. P. pennant!" he shouted in the signalman's ear.

Madcap didn't answer to that immediately. First he proceeded to show Captain Mylan where he "headed in." He signaled back:

Get busy. Bend your towing-hawser to our line and pay it out to us through towing-chock on your port side, so that we can warp your bow around to seaward. Bear a hand. Watch signalman on our after turret, and obey orders promptly.
CAPTAIN BUCKBURN.

"*Captain* Buckburn!" Mylan turned a wild look upon his executive officer, who stood beside him, mayhap laughing up his sleeve. "Since when? His name wasn't on that Alnav!"

The executive shrugged.

"It might have been added," he remarked meekly. Then pointing toward the *Wingham*, "She's hoisting the interrogatory flag, sir."

"It's bluff! Pure, bare-faced bluff!" Mylan bawled. But he knew in his mean little heart that it was no such thing. He knew that Madcap Buckburn never bluffed. And the next order Mylan shouted down to his men on deck showed that he knew that.

"Pull in that line. Take it forward to the focsle. Bend on the towing-hawser and pass it through the port chock. Bear a hand!"

Fortunately his preceding order, to heave the line overboard, had not yet been carried out.

Over on the *Wingham's* upper decks the boatswain's mates were bellowing:

"Lay aft on the quarter-deck, everybody! Haul in the *Felena's* tow-line!"

A couple of hundred gobs can overhaul a hundred fathoms or so of tow-line in a very few minutes. Like a huge serpent, the big hawser, bent to the end of the smaller line, came racing through the water as fast as the *Wingham's* gobs could gallop the length of the quarter-deck, break off, dash aft, grab hold and gallop forward again. In five minutes the bow-line in the end of the big hawser was being hauled up over the *Wingham's* stern end. They looped it over the towing-bitts on the quarter-deck.

From on top of the *Wingham's* after turret Madcap's signalman semaphored:

Cast your kedge-anchors adrift, and come ahead full speed, with full right rudder.

"The —— lunatic! He's crazy! Mad!" Mylan yelled. But he obeyed.

Ever so cautiously Madcap now commenced juggling his engines.

"Ahead one-third, port engine," he called down to the man at the engine-room telegraph. But the instant the powerful propeller began churning the water under her stern end, he snapped, "Stop!"

HE WAITED, his glowing dark eyes fixed on the long heavy hawser, which rose slowly up out of the water, as that slight "kick ahead" increased the distance between the two vessels. But not quite did the line rise clear of the water.

"Ahead one-third, port," Madcap said again. And again, "Stop!"

The time the line stretched out till all but a very short length of it, a portion midway between the ships, was above water.

"Rudder amidships," Madcap sang out. "Ahead one-third, both engines."

"One-third port," "One-third starboard," responded the two annunciator men.

Looking down astern over the white swirl of water churned up by the propellers, Macap's eyes ranged along the line to that still submerged portion of it. With every nerve and muscle of him he watched it.

"Stop 'er!" he barked, as the line rose clear of the water. "Astern one-third, starboard," he added quickly, fearful of parting the hawser, by too abrupt a strain on it.

The big rope tautened out, its vibrations sending the water splashing from it. A tense moment for Madcap followed. He had seen more than one towing-hawser parted. He had seen some of the biggest rope made, immense hawsers, six inches in diameter, go—with nothing more than a *spoof!* But this hawser didn't go with a *spoof*. That kick astern with the starboard propeller eased the strain. Madcap relaxed.

"Stop 'er," he called down in a much eased tone. "How's the rudder?"

" 'Midships, sir," answered the helmsman.

"Ahead one-third, both engines," Madcap commanded, and then turned to Lieutenant-Commander Warwick, who stood inboard at the standard compass. "Got your landmarks?"

"Yes, sir," the executive answered; "I've got a flagpole, or a radio tower—something over there."

"All right, hold it. Check us up. Stop the engines!"

And under the drive of that last kick ahead the *Wingham* took up the remaining slack in the line beautifully. Nor did Madcap lose an inch of it. The instant he saw that line to be taut he again sent his ship ahead one-third speed with both engines. She settled down and bucked into it.

"Two-thirds!" shouted Madcap. "Steady as you go, lad," he added to the helmsman. Then: "Full speed ahead, both engines!" She settled down deep aft, the water under her stern end seething and boiling.

"Give us all you've got!" the officer of the deck shouted to the engine-room through a voice-tube.

With that powerful hound of the sea pulling for all she was worth, and the full thrust of her own propeller helping, the little gunboat came sliding down off that sand-bar so quickly that it made the gobs on her upper decks turn loose their lung-power.

"Silence!" roared Mylan. But they kept on yelling. He danced back and forth across the bridge, threatening to court-martial every man aboard. And still they yelled.

Soon she was well offshore, in deep water. The heavy hawser slackened, as the *Wingham* slowed down. Madcap's signalman on the turret semaphored—

Haul in your line.

"—— it!" Mylan snapped to his executive officer.

"Shall we request permission to proceed on duty assigned, sir?" asked the executive officer.

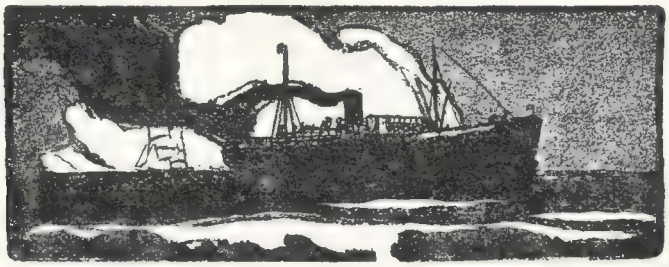
"No, —— it, no!" Madcap barked at him. But a moment later he thought better of it. "Yes, —— it, yes!" he yapped.

It wasn't necessary to semaphore this; there's a three-flag hoist covering it. The *Felena* hoisted the signal. The *Wingham* ran up the answering pennant; then a moment later she hoisted the affirmative flag—permission granted.

"Drat it!" Mylan glared after the big cruiser, as she swung away to the northward, bound for Shanghai. "He hasn't told me yet on whose authority he hoisted that S.O.P. pennant!"

CAPTAIN MYLAN received this craved information later, by radio. Madcap had one of his operators repeat the message Hastings had caught on the fly from Pearl Harbor the night before. This message from the Navy Department, while official, was more of a personal nature, concerning Madcap Buckburn in particular, as it did. But Madcap was not in the least qualmish about airing it to the whole cock-eyed world.

It stated the findings of the court of inquiry investigating the affair of the destroyer *Bruton*. That court had acquitted Commander Buckburn of the charge of "rashly and unnecessarily hazarding the ship under his command; had held that under those conditions and circumstances Commander Buckburn was fully justified in ramming the German submarine." In view of which, the message stated further, the Department was advancing Commander Buckburn to the rank of captain, this promotion being dated back seven months.



UNCLE JOHN'S THEORY

by David Thibault

Author of "Flood," "Salvage," etc.

RESPECTFUL but heavy footsteps sounded on the porch. A voice at once unctuous and urgent followed a perfunctory throat clearing—

"Mistuh Bain!"

"Well?" barked the plantation manager toward the door. It was unwritten law that his noon hour be sacred from interruption.

"Uncle Jawn Key done gone crazy an' shot Melkiah Jones an' Robert Williams."

"I'll be out."

"Yessuh."

Bain heaved a heavy sigh. His colorful, lonely life, crowded with work and responsibility, was full enough. To him adventures were just so many hard, dangerous jobs. Besides, he liked his unkempt bachelor's room, which he must leave fifteen minutes earlier than usual, and he liked Uncle John Key, who might have to be dealt with roughly. He picked up his forty-four S. & W. Special from the table, waded through the litter of newspapers and magazines on the floor and swung open the door.

Bain's ever-saddled horse, droop-eared and half asleep beneath the water oak at the gate, also resented this noon-hour alarm. The manager flung the reins over the animal's head and swung into the worn saddle all in one motion. Willie Thompson, his black straw-boss, held the yard gate wide.

"Boss, ol' Uncle Jawn is sho' crazy dis time. He done shot Melkiah an' Rob."

"Where's he at?"

"He in his yawd. He done shot at everybody dat come by his house."

"How bad are they hurt?"

"Not overly. It wuz bird shot. Melkiah got fo' or five in de han', but Rob jes got stung through his clo's."

Bain grunted and turned his horse with a push of one knee and a kick of the opposite heel.

"Boss!"

"Well?"

"He talked to Rob 'fo' he shot him. He 'lowed a man wuz de same as a tree, an' couldn't feel no pain if you kilt him a-standin' up."

"What the —— are you talking about?"

"Yessuh." Willie was pleased at the interest—however choloric—his recital had aroused. "Rob he told me. He say dat's what Uncle Jawn's crazy 'bout. He done cut down so many trees he don't think uv nuthin' else. He say Uncle Jawn he want to proof dat if you treats a man same as a tree he won't feel no pain—even if you kills him. Rob 'lowed Uncle Jawn wanted him to stan' up an' let him saw him down to proof it."

Willie flashed his perfect teeth in a grin.

"Well?" demanded the manager impatiently. He had learned, in long years of dealing with a simple people, that point of view is everything.

"Rob he thought Uncle Jawn wuz jokin', an' let him stan' him up an' git his saw. Uncle Jawn made a rake at Rob, an' Rob lef' out away from de yawd. Uncle Jawn call to him to come back, an' when Rob he didn't, then is when Uncle Jawn shot him."

Willie flashed his smile again as he pictured Robert's predicament. Bain grunted, not greatly impressed, and rode down the turn-row. Behind him a babble of excited voices rose from the negroes gathered at the big mule barn. Besides the hands who were taking their mid-day rest, women and children from the quarters were also there, getting the latest, and "mirating" over the two wounded heroes. Everybody enjoyed the affair thoroughly—Robert and Melkiah more than any others. Next to a funeral, a "shootin' scrape" is prized on plantations as alleviation of ennui.

"Boss," called Willie Thompson anxiously, as the space between himself and the manager widened. "Hadn't I better go 'long, too? Dat ol' nigger's crazy as a bessy bug."

"You stay here. I want that railroad forty chopped out this afternoon. Get 'em on it at one o'clock, and make 'em watch what they're doing. I don't want my stand of cotton ruined. Understand?"

"Yessuh"—reluctantly.

Bain did not share the general spirit of pleased expectancy. While he had no conscious thought for his own safety, the problem of capturing Uncle John without injuring the old negro was perplexing. The wiry hardwood timberman, who was nearing eighty, was one of the manager's favorites. Uncle John was an institution on Big Bend plantation.

As he rode down the dusty turn-row, Bain recalled many lively incidents in which the old darky had figured. There was the gruesome find of Winston Payn's body in the pasture; then there was the unforgetable night which Uncle John and the manager had spent, storm-bound, in "de house where de white woman died."

John had been among the twenty-two men marooned with Bain on Indian Mound when Bee Bayou crevasse inundated Laconia Circle, and today the manager remembered the old negro's faithful warning on the Mound, to which he probably owed his life; and also the closing mishap of that bleak adventure in which he had saved Uncle John from the icy waters of Pecan Bayou.

The old woodsman lived alone in the very last cabin on the plantation—a tiny shack which overhung the high bank of Pecan Bayou. When Bain came within fifty yards of the fateful little house he involuntarily checked his horse, and advancing at an easy fox-trot, eyed the premises warily with lowered head and every outward evidence of unconcern. He was careful to keep his eyes under the level of his heavy hat brim; at this distance even a pot-metal, a single-shot, cylinder-bore weapon such as he knew Uncle John's to be, could drive chilled shot into a man's hollow.

The yard was clean-swept, and from its concrete-like soil giant sunflowers, hollyhocks, and Prince's feathers stood forth with every appearance of having been stuck up in the polished earth, rather than having grown from it. "Frizz" chickens clucked and peeped among these artificial-seeming surroundings, and five variegated puppies whined, played and tumbled about on a footing of equality and familiarity with the fowls.

Among these peaceful flora and fauna Bain saw Uncle John. He sat upon the apex of an up-ended stick of wood, his legs wide spread to maintain equilibrium. Across his lap lay a long single-barrel shotgun of that class of weapon upon which no maker's name appears.

BAIN saw that he was seen, but came on as before. Uncle John's right hand moved. Bain felt the blood settle about his heart during one thick second, but he made no change in his tactics.

"Go back, white folks, go back!" There was a distinct pang connected with old John's failure to know him. Bain was abreast of the yard now.

"You is clost enough!" screamed the maniac.

At the fence corner the path turned back of the cabin, and descending the twenty-five-foot bluff of bayou bank, wound on northward along the water's edge. With his heart alternately racing and skipping, and his ear actually weary with waiting for the expected roar of the gun, Bain, still oblivious to the negro's shrieks and gestures, turned the corner of the cabin and steadied his horse down the precipitous bank.

He rode a hundred yards along the bayou, swung down from the saddle, tied his horse and returned to the cabin on foot. With the utmost stealth he regained the level of the fields. Circling the house to the left, he came directly behind Uncle John, who had his eyes glued on the plantation road down which Bain had just come. The

manager, taking every precaution, crept to within thirty feet of the statue-like negro.

Slowly he leveled his heavy blue revolver, sighing heavily as he did so—for the path up the bank had been steep, and the day was hot. He grasped the butt of the weapon with both hands; his aim was long, and carefully taken.

There was a terrific roar. John's supporting stick of wood, struck squarely in the middle by the two hundred and forty grain bullet, flew from under him precipitating the old darkey, gun and all, upon the ground. The chickens and puppies shrieked bloody murder—but the black man was stunned by the suddenness of things.

In half of a starved second the manager had scooped up the shotgun, opened it, extracted the shell and tossed the weapon on the ground.

"Get up," he ordered sharply, putting up his revolver.

"If dey took death a-standin' like a tree, or a-layin' like a log, it wouldn't hurt 'em. I's gwine to tell Mistuh Bain, an' he'll *make* 'em let me try. Don't I know? Ain't I felled timber fer nigh on to eighty year? Ain't one tree nor ain't one log been hurt. Dey takes death a-standin' an' a-layin'. But a nigger dey runs or gits in de bed to die—"

The tone was uncanny—convincing. The mad logic of the speaker shook Bain's nerves as many a ghastly crisis had failed to do.

"All right, Uncle John—all right! You come on with me, and you can try it. If nobody else will let you try it on 'em, you can try it on me."

"Can I, boss—can I?" Wild joy distorted the wizened, gray-framed features of the ancient black man. "Can I? White folks is got sense! I *knowed* they'd understand. Does you know my boss-man, Mistuh Bain?"

"Yes. Let's go see him." The manager maneuvered to get Uncle John in front, and by promises, cajolery and infinite patience seasoned with timely firmness, steered him toward the path. He thought it better to get his captive under the bayou bank and there calm him if possible. Exit toward the quarters or the barn, and probable encounter with curious women and children was to be avoided at all costs.

John descended the path docily with Bain one step behind, ready to grab the thin old shoulder. Half way down the manager's spur caught on a washed-out root. He tripped, plunged forward, knocked his prisoner headlong, and they reached the bottom of the bank together in a tangle of mightily striving legs and arms. Bain's head brought up violently against a cypress knee, and a period of blackness, intershot with painful points of light, supervened.

When the manager came to himself, he was in the bottom of Uncle John's pirogue. The insane proprietor was placidly paddling the temperamental craft; through his familiarity with the visible bluff banks and trees, Bain knew that they were afloat on Pecan Bayou. He knew too that his hands were tightly tied—wrists crossed on his abdomen—that his ankles were bound immovably with three-eighths inch plow-line and that there was a strip of red cotton bandanna securely fastened in his mouth. He was only partially gagged, but to his mumbled attempts at persuasion Uncle John paid not the slightest heed. Movement of the lips and jaws was not prevented—a circumstance for which he was duly grateful a little later.

A pirogue is no craft with which a bound passenger should take liberties. Bain knew this as well as any one. But when he saw shining beside him Uncle John's eight-foot cross-cut saw, and the old timberman's razor-keen double-bitted ax, he squirmed as much as his circumstances permitted—until looking upward he saw the glint of water, hanging ready to pour over the gunwale.

"Lay still, white man, an' wait! It hurts to git drownded. If you takes death a-standin' like a tree, or a-layin' like a log, it don't hurt none. Ain't I done cut down 'bout a million of 'em? Don't Uncle Jawn Key know? You ax Mister Bain. Ax my boss-man—he'll tell you 'bout Uncle Jawn Key. Yessuh. If you takes death a-standin' like a tree or a-layin' like a log, it *can't* hurt."

The bound man considered what his chances would be if the tricky boat should turn over, and lay still. Tied hand and foot, he would drown like a stunned puppy if the dugout capsized.

As he lay working furtively but furiously to loosen his bonds, he realized that only in stories and moving pictures are men so tied that they can free themselves at the

providential last minute. A few John Keys, thought Bain bitterly, would be fatal to eleventh hour rescues.

The pirogue's bow touched bottom. Uncle John shipped his paddle, stepped into the shallow water, and wrapping his thin sinewy arms about the manager, heaved the big man up to his shoulder as one would handle a sack of grain. Tottering under his load, the old negro hoisted himself up the steep path and carefully eased Bain to the ground beneath a huge moss-draped live-oak. Nothing but the burning urge of an insane purpose could have strung his old muscles to the feat.

"Tell me if I hurts you, white folks. Ol' Jawn is gwin' to be jes as easy as he kin. I *knows* death can't hurt if you takes it a-standin' like a tree, or a-layin' like a log."

He descended to the boat and returned a moment later bearing his saw, ax and shotgun. The saw and gun were dropped to the ground; Bain noted that the weapon was cocked. It must have made the entire voyage in that dangerous condition.

SLOWLY, but with the shrewd, telling strokes of an expert woodsman, Uncle John felled a willow sapling. Its diameter was about four inches. The negro paused in his work, snapped the sweat from his brow with his bony old hands, and then calmly cutting a long cane from the bayou bank, measured the bound man with it from chin to feet. The cane was then laid on the sapling, and a billet of equal length cut from the willow. Other saplings were felled, and cut into lengths. Not once did Uncle John measure one stick by another, but used each time the "measurer"—as a good woodsman should.

When he had a substantial pile of these short poles cut, the maniac descended again to the boat, this time returning with a large ball of staging. His movements were unhurried but effective; a skilled workman was getting down to his day's bit.

Laying one of the poles on the prostrate man lengthwise, he fastened it there by passing a loop of staging about both stick and body. Another pole was bound in the same manner on Bain's body—another and another, until it was encased completely from chin to feet. He was the center of a huge fascine of green willow poles.

His head protruded from one end of the bundle, which was soon the diameter of a large barrel. Half crushed, Bain was suffocating with the weight of the encompassing mass, until by some freak of pressure the inner circle of poles locked, and itself thereafter bore the increasing stress, as the madman added sapling after sapling to the bundle.

Imagine a huge Venetian blind with the slats made of poles as thick as a man's wrist; imagine a man rolled up in it, like a long loaf of bread in brown paper.

Uncle John added a final pole, and then methodically drove four stakes—two on each side—to prevent the bundle rolling. The imprisoned man's face was upward. His neck, extending beyond the supporting ends of the poles, unable longer to sustain the weight of his head, was bent downward at a frightful angle; the chin, above the strip of red bandanna, was thrust upward.

"Po' feller,—po' feller!" commented the old negro. "Uncle Jawn most forgot; but he sho' will make you res' easy." He dragged forward a fragment of rotten stump, placed his ragged coat neatly folded, on top, and gently raising the recumbent head, settled it with tender solicitude on the rude pillow.

He then leaned his ax and shotgun against the bundle of poles, spat on his gnarled, angular hands, seized the huge eight-foot cross-cut saw and placed it in position on top of this artificial log!

"White man, if you takes your death a-standin' like a tree, or a-layin' like a log, it *can't* hurt. I's worked in timber nigh on to eighty year, an' I *knows*. You'll see! You'll see!"

The first dragging stroke of the great saw cut half way through the top pole of the bundle.

Back and forth, back and forth, the sinewy black arms of the mad octogenarian sped the ringing silver steel blade. It descended through the soft wood of the severed willows as a warm knife sinks through butter.

Bain lay open eyed. From his position he could not see all that was taking place, but the purpose and outcome were impressively comprehensible.

Half way down to his shrinking body, the saw lay still a moment in the deepening cut, and the maniac, panting with his exertions, again expounded his theory:

"If you takes death a-standin' like a tree,

or a-layin' like a log, it can't hurt. De Lawd done sont me to 'splain it to de world. If you takes death a-standin' like a tree, or a-layin' like a log, it can't hurt—it jes *can't!*"

He resumed work.

Bain's imagination traced the descent of the ringing blade, and pictured its destination with merciless detail. As by clairvoyant perception, he followed the swishing teeth through every cut fiber of the wood. Yet while terror stood above him like a pillow of cloud, his mind worked, even under the cloud's shadow—and worked effectively.

The shotgun, which John had leaned against the end of the bundle through that instinct of the good timberman who wants no tools left under foot, had, early in the sawing, slipped gradually downward, unnoticed by the madman. Its lock now lay against Bain's cheek. Turning his head as far to the right as possible, the manager could, despite the gag, grasp trigger guard and trigger in his mouth. The weapon was still at full cock. Bain believed that by a supreme contortion he could discharge it. The diversion might stay the maniac's hand—might possibly attract a rescuer.

But these possibilities were but phantoms that moved behind the larger idea—the overweening necessity for action—any activity that could, before sanity broke and crumbled to panic, give another meaning to life than the contemplation of a horrible death; another measure of time than that rung out by the descent of the saw.

He grasped the trigger guard in his teeth. Then his mind functioned more calmly. After this last hope—what? An answering idea born of the horrible proximity of those snarling teeth, shot through his brain. His hands, bound one above the other, lay on his stomach, crossed and re-crossed by the strong cord with which they were tied. If the saw should strike there first—? The birth of hope was painful for it gave to suspense point and poignancy without taking away horror.

Already the bundle of poles was disintegrating—losing its integrity as a bundle, as stick after stick was bitten through. If his hands were only free, and some diversion should stay the saw for a second! He gripped the trigger guard in his teeth again and waited, the dumbness of his agony adding incalculably to the mortal strain.

Another stroke, and Bain felt the descending saw brush above his bound wrists. It was more a sixth-sense premonition than an actual sensory stimulus. Again the rasping blade swept forward and back. This time there was actual contact, and the long saw vibrated violently as the fiber of the rope about his wrists gummed its teeth and drags.

There was no pain yet; but he knew that his arms, so long bound, must be numb to the elbow. He concentrated his will—the will of a man who sees life and death in one glance—into moving his hands. Stinging, rasping pain shot through his wrists. Bain closed his eyes and bit upon the trigger. The gun roared out under echoing trees, and stunned with terror, the mad sawman sprang back, as the huge shell of the fascine collapsed, and Bain sat up in the wreckage.

His hands were free. A little blood smeared his right wrist; he noticed it as he quickly unknotted the plow-line from his feet.

Bain and his prisoner—securely tied this time—were met by Willie Thompson at the juncture of the path and the main plantation turn-row.

"Why ain't you with those hoe-hands, Willie?" sharply demanded the manager.

"Boss, I jes got stud'in' 'bout what mout happen to you down heah all by yo'self, an' wuz *'bleeged* to come."

The overseer excused his devotion with an irresistible ivory grin.

"Well—better get on back, Willie. Those niggers will cut up a thousand dollars worth of cotton."

"Yessuh."

As his mule ambled ahead, Willie turned, his left hand palm down on the animal's sleek rump.

"Boss, did you have any trouble wid him?"

"No—not particular."

THE RED JESTER

by F St Mars

Author of "Gray Ghost," "A King's Meal," etc.

NATURE created him as a jest. She blazoned on the body of a hawk the livery of a paroquet. Then, because the discord was too appalling, and since she could not undo what she had done, added a roguish touch of humor, a spirit of pure mischief, which made the jumble pardonable. The result was the jay, which is also our jester.

Before heaven and the wild he was no more than a footpad—a "gentleman of the road," if you will—but still a footpad. Before man he was a voice, a rancorous, untuneful screech, in which all the discord of his being seemed to find expression.

Nature, following the paroquet plan, had dressed him in a brick-red zouave and a creamy-white breast, had added a black and white, boldly-slashed crest, wings and tail, and finally had daubed on each wing a splash of light-blue enamel, a pinch of the very sky, and by a stroke of pure genius had foiled the gem with bars of jet.

He stood upon the lower whorl of a beech tree and called down curses upon a bronze heap among last year's bronze leaves. The heap was a hen-pheasant, impassive as the Sphinx. She dare not move, because under her small body was hidden all her world—fourteen eggs of khaki enamel.

For one hour, seventeen minutes and five seconds the jester had tried every trick he could think of to shift that pheasant six yards, and he had not shifted her a sixth of an inch.

The deadlock was complete.

Suddenly he was smitten with an idea. He cocked his head on one side, and deliberately and carefully scratched his cranium. Then he disappeared.

The hen-pheasant, thanking providence for the unexpected removal of the beautiful terror, nestled down to sleep, when the unmusical challenge of her lord and master evoked a truly bird-like twist of her head to listen. When, however, it was answered, crashing, echoing through the outraged silence of the very beechwood itself, her neck increased in length by as much again in stupefaction.

Followed a hushed pause; then, soft and subdued, from a tangle of briers, the low "*chuck, chuck, ch-u-r-ka, chuck*" of a cock-pheasant seeking his mate.

The hen-bird's neck stretched to its full length. Her nest was a secret she hoped to share alone with nature. He might, if he came closer, find it, and then—she knew her husband. Up she stood, and with a quick, crouching run, broke for the brier-thicket, where she lost herself among the clawed mazes in a vain endeavour to lead her master away.

Out of the top of that place shot the jester. He must have approached it from the other side unseen; and he was more than proud of his skill in so exactly copying a cock-pheasant's voice, since there was, in hard fact, no cock-pheasant within many hundred yards of the place.

His business was urgent and private. He dealt in eggs—pheasant eggs for the

moment, and the buffets of a hard-hearted world had taught him to make much of his chances; they might not come again. Quick was the order, and quick he was. He sucked for dear life. A pheasant's nest is an El Dorado which does not spread itself in the jay's wilderness every day, you will understand. One egg was no more. Another followed, and he was just starting on the third when—oh, horror!—here comes that stupid pheasant.

He was aware, so much as there was any time to be aware of anything at all, out of the corner of one twinkling eye, of a young whirlwind coming down upon him. The hen-pheasant was returning in a halo of leaves, saying things in defamation of the jester's character.

Then things happened. Leaves whirled, and the peace and silence were shattered, but the jay tumbled out of it with yet another egg transfixed on his beak, and straightway fled up the darkest silent aisle of hoary beech boles, and was lost to sight.

Later, the jester dined at ease on the thousand-year-old root of one of the trees, and had just finished when something moved somewhere upon the leaf carpet. You do not, if you are jay and have a price upon your black-and-white-crested head, ignore even the turning of a leaf. Moreover, leaves do not, in the heated summer, get up and walk about without reason. He promptly placed the mighty stem between himself and the sound; and took observations round the lichened bend.

He became aware, after a bit, of a pigeon, a wood-pigeon, and she was looking for something; and the thing for which she searched must have been of value, since she was in a monstrous hurry. Above that spot she had a nest. This, however, the jester did not know. Nevertheless, since the spirit of the last gift given him by repentant nature worked within him, he flounced out suddenly with a diabolical screech which sent that pigeon up into the branched roof as if she were a rocket.

He had done this out of pure mischief, with no special object in mind beyond the fun of seeing that pigeon fly off in fright. Then he almost fell on his beak over something round and hard, that rolled under foot in a bunch of dead leaves, which had saved it from being broken in the fall. It was a pigeon's egg.

WHILE he sampled the dainty the leaves began to move again. Leaves are always on the move in big, still woods, by the way, and there is no wind to shift them; have you noticed that? Anon—the jay had dived around a tree by this time—the cause turned into brown, dusky shapes, which in their turn became rabbits.

Then the jester, sitting on a low-hung bough, very quiet and very prim, screeched.

Those rabbits went as if lighted crackers had gone off beneath them. All the wild looks upon the shriek of a jay as a danger-signal, and acts accordingly. That twice out of three times the shriek is given only for fun all the wild does not know.

Then the jester preened his feathers carefully, as if nothing had happened, before taking his flight to a lake hidden among green foliage.

It was half choked with green scum, this silent lake, and the scum was checkered with waterways, and down a water-way came one of the makers of the same. She was a bird, and she was black, and her beak was of coral.

She was—if I may be pardoned the expression—a hen-moorhen, off her nest for a few minutes to stretch her cramped legs and to catch some insects for lunch, or to hunt for muddy mysteries along the shaded shores. She had not left her nest for twenty-four hours, and she did not think it would hurt. It was well hidden, even for a moorhen's home, and there appeared to be no enemies about. Appeared to be! Foolish bird! Is the wild ever without enemies?

And the jester sat very still upon an alder bough, and watched as one who knows, and knowing, understands.

"*Krerk-krerk!*"

The jay cocked his head on one side, carefully marking the call of the moorhen seeking her mate. The sound echoed uncannily in this damp, still place. He waited for an answer. So did she; but the only answer was the plash of a roach, pike-hunted in a far corner.

"*Krerk-krerk!*"

Again the odd, sharp cry, but no reply. Death, in the shape of a migrating peregrine falcon, had come that way and had passed, and—again I must claim pardon for the term—the cock-moorhen had passed with it.

Then it was that the jay skidded quietly in the direction whence the moorhen had come, nipping in and out of the leafy ways in a manner that would have been a marvel if it had not been also his daily custom. He was looking for that nest, and as a professional nest-hunter he was second to none.

Among the rustling, ranked rushes by an islet, hidden with the knowledge of an expert and the care of a mother, he found it. At least he thought he did.

It was a platform of rushes, a raft as it were, and it floated, being specially designed for that purpose, and on it rested eggs to the number of four, of a soiled white hue. There he made the mistake, for the eggs of a moorhen should muster not fewer than eight; they are more brown than white, and are decorated with reddish patches.

With one eye upon the moorhen—he could just see her through the reeds as she jerked herself across the lake—and the other eye on the work in claw, he fed. It was a great feed, for those eggs were over two inches long, and he was much engrossed in the taste and beauty of it all. That may be why he, whose pride lay in his keenness of vision, failed entirely to locate a head which rested on the surface of the water for the space of ten seconds only.

It was a long, thin, snaky head with amazingly bright eyes, and it sank without sound, as the conning tower of a submarine sinks. It was taking observations, that head, and it saw apparently all that was needful, and more—much more.

Followed a pause, during which a chiff-chaff, a dot high up on a spire of alder, tinkled silver bells in two keys, thus—

"Chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff!"

Something jumped at something out of the water, turning the green-washed glass of the lake to growing circles.

A tomtit essayed to chase a green- and ruby-jeweled dragon-fly, and lost the quarry, his way and almost his life, among the trellised boughs, and a swallow skated along the surface of the water and vanished again without sound.

It was the suck and fall-back of water that did it. No beast or bird can leave the water absolutely without sound, though many can enter that element silently. It was but an infinitesimal sucking and dripping, but it caused the jay to fling himself sideways without looking round to ask questions.

One does not wait to ask questions in the wild, one acts on the instant, or slightly before, if possible. Nor does one jump forward or backward—for that is anticipated by the enemy—but straight upwards or to one side.

It was as if a spear had whizzed past the jay's head, missing him by a hundredth of an inch, and he turned where he lay and looked. Almost on top of him was a bird, a glistening, boat-shaped, trim, big, long-necked, white-fronted bird. On his lean, long, snaky head was a crest, and he wore side-whiskers, and his beak would have been a javelin if it had not been a beak—but it was his eyes that held the jay's gaze. It was as if two stars had come down from heaven and turned black. The legs of this bird were short and worn at the extreme end of the body, but this was a minor detail beside those wonderful orbs.

The jay lay very still on his side, with one gorgeous wing half upraised, as if to ward off the blow of the spear-sharp beak.

The bird above him, the bird whose nest he was robbing, was a great-crested grebe, which is also called a loon, a bird of the diver persuasion, and a fisher by profession. Had the jay known whose nest he had mistaken for a moorhen's, he would not—but no matter. He did not know it.

THE awful, drawn, tense silence which followed was just beginning to make the jay feel sick—for it is no pleasant thing to sit in another person's house and count the seconds to your own death—when the jester's quick eyes, looking past the grebe, saw something that fixed his attention. It was a movement in the water, and in the centre of that movement was a head; a flat, evil head with cold, expressionless eyes, and it rolled to and fro on a long neck with a singular, pendulum-like motion, as it sawed through the green sludge toward them.

The grebe's back was turned to this apparition, which is probably the reason why, instead of driving his beak clean through the jay—which was certainly his intention—he spun round suddenly upon his webbed feet at the invitation of a long-drawn, malignant hiss, delivered over his left shoulder. He found himself staring into the relentless, lidless orbs of a twenty-five-inch adder, and nearly fell backward in consequence.

The snake drew himself out of the water with that terrifying deliberation peculiar to all reptiles, and surveyed the nest critically. During which period, the jay took advantage of this special intervention of providence to remove very quickly, and without comment of any kind.

He was aware of a mighty swirling in the depths behind him, and a hiss that choked and ended in a lashing of foam, by which token he concluded that the forces were already engaged, so to speak. He did not, however, stay to see the result. The grebe might win.

Knowing the annoying courage of the breed—of all divers—he thought that it was possible—such things had been heard of in the wild—and he had no desire to be found loafing about when that grebe was unoccupied once more.

He set off on a twisting flight among the intricate openings between alders, willows, and sallows.

It was a marshy, fenny place, heavy with damp of undrained soil and rotting vegetation, smelling of ooze, and if anything were needed to prove it, there were the aforementioned alders, sallows and willows, not to mention the wiry water-guelders, and the palm willows, growing in supreme but amazingly picturesque confusion.

Here, then, in this hot, languid place, lulled to sleep by the honeyed cooing of turtle-doves, the jay discovered a drinking place of the birds. He took observations from behind a screen of sallow leaves, and took stock therefrom of the inhabitants of the district. After a time he sauntered down to drink—that was after that detective of the bird world, the missel thrush, had departed upon his noisy business.

Even among such a gay and dainty company as goldfinches, chaffinches, greenfinches, bearded tits, marsh tits, reed warblers, sedge warblers, grasshopper warblers, dippers, wagtails pied, wagtails yellow, and wagtails gray, he was conspicuous. There were coots on the water—ruffianly hooligan birds and bobbing moorhens, and skidding dabchicks. And above it all, above the twitterings and scoldings and caustic comments rose the heavy, ceaseless hum of the insect world.

The jay moved circumspectly. Judging by appearance his one object in seeking that place was to drink. That a portion of yellow yolk still clung to his beak, he had entirely failed to notice.

He sidled to the water and gulped. He looked at no one, unless the bird had his back turned. He gave place to many, and smaller birds than himself, too, with a courteousness that would have been admirable if it had not been unnatural.

Most of them made room for him, however; the older and more experienced birds especially. They did not fly away exactly, or shriek with alarm, but they gave him room to swing in the fairway, so to speak, and the uproar of their scandalous chatterings visibly died down. Some of them had seen jays before, apparently—and birds have a longer memory than scoffers think.

As for the jester, he seemed visibly hurt at this aloofness. He was a sociable ruffian and entertaining, as professional adventurers usually are. After all, it was his business, and he had to live.

He ambled about this place, doing nothing in particular, looking for less, considering the ground—even birds can get used to anything in time. They knew the jay's reputation—it was not too spotless. But they kept on coming and going all the same, and there was bound to be some inexperienced youngster sooner or later who—ah!

A chaffinch cock, half drunk with the gorgeousness of his own gorgeous livery and the incense of summer all about in the hot air, ranged alongside. He would like to know many things, among others—for the young were ever curious—what the deuce the jester meant by carrying such a patch of blue, of the high heaven itself, on his wing coverts.

THE jester answered in person—a side-long rush, a grab of quite wicked and certainly business-like claws, a squawk of scandalised stupefaction from the chaffinch, a burst of alarmed whirring wings as the crowd fled in a hurry, and silence.

"*Chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff!*" sang the tiny bell-man from the dizzy heights.

"*Chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff, j-r-r-r-rh!*" answered the jay, in mocking chorus from a willow very much pollarded.

Under his claw was the young chaffinch, who said nothing, for the simple reason that he was dead.

And the jay scattered the inquisitive one's

finery to the slanting summer sun-rays, and fed mightily, chuckling the while.

After that, at her appointed time, night swooped down, and coaxed steamy mists out of this damp place, and other things, crawly, stealthy, gliding things, which were not steamy mists, but worse, very much worse. The jay thought some of them were otters. Conceivably others were rats. Without question many were water-moles, and, equally without question, because her eyes shone like miniature green-yellow shaded motor-lamps, one was a cat, a poaching cat, whose reputation would have curled the hair of any average fiend.

Goodness! What was that? Something climbed the alder on which he roosted. Was it an eel, or a snake, or—? The something went down again, not with pleasure, and screaming as one who is in trouble and pain and terror past human, or any other, comprehension.

The jay breathed a sigh of relief. He hated the night with the sullen hatred of all who are not nocturnal. Its alarms—and only a wild creature comprehends the deadly terror of night alarms, when you flee blindly, pursued by you know not whom; the vague fears, and vaguer sounds, and the cries that come from nowhere, and die, and are repeated by you know not what.

That the something was a frog—he could still hear its shrieks—hunted by a snake, was a small matter, and unknown to him, anyway.

He would sleep now, however, with half an eye open—always that—for there is no insurance in the wild.

Just before midnight a thunderstorm chose to break over the spot.

The jay, very much awake by then, had to listen between rumblings for the stalking of a possible enemy.

Claws scratched on bark. The jester opened his wings. Then the claws fled precipitately, other claws following. By the scratch, the jay fancied this might have been a rat surprized by a stoat, and he was probably right. But the jay fell asleep in the middle of it.

Dawn came, and with it the jester lifted his head, ruffled his feathers, opened his beak to screech an insolent gibe at the crowing pheasants, and—shut it again very suddenly indeed.

About twenty yards away began a wood with its feet in the low ground and its head on a low hill, and at the spot where the jay saw it two "rides" met.

At the point of the angle of brushwood where these said "rides" joined stood a figure, dark, still, upright, the unmistakable figure of a man. Equally unmistakably it was a keeper, for under its arm was a gun, or what looked like one. And the figure stood and stared and said never a word.

"When in doubt, freeze," is a motto in the wild.

The jay "froze." He knew he was within shot. He knew that if he moved he would be seen, and, by the same token, slain. Moreover, there was something unusual about this figure.

Why, for instance, did the stoat, fresh from he alone knew what murder, walk round the feet of that keeper as if he were the man's greatest pal? Why, again, did the blackbird, who is not usually either drunk or mad, sit on a hazel-bough within grasp of the man's right hand? And why, oh why, should a squirrel sit on the keeper's hat?

These things, and other things leading to yet others, drew the jay in ever narrowing but mightily wary circles closer and closer to the dumb figure of a man who killed not, till at last he took the place of the aforesaid blackbird, and he discovered, what all the other wild folk knew, that the thing was only a hollow dummy, and no man after all.

Having thoroughly inspected the strange phenomenon and taken its bearing for future use, he removed up one of the "rides," and the first person he met was a squirrel. Now, it is none of the squirrel's business to hang round pheasant's nests, and the great, secret seclusion of the pheasant's cradle is not lawfully serenaded by the rude, abusive chatter of such a one.

The jay stopped to see the fun. He was always ready to do that. In fact, he tweaked the squirrel's tail, well knowing that the trouble with all squirrels is that they have a confirmed conviction that all the wild is trying to play them a joke.

The squirrel whipped round from the beautiful array of khaki-enamel pheasant treasures and told that jay what he thought of him.

As abuse, if one knew the meaning of it, it would have made a trooper's hair lift. The jay, however, knew not the meaning, and cared less. He only wanted to know what in the name of shotguns the squirrel

was doing with pheasants' nests, and how the slander-monger, the busybody of the woods, might be decoyed away from the quite providential find.

A busy, orange-billed blackbird chose that moment to panic round the corner as if all the infernal regions were loose at his heels. They were not, of course, but there was a shadow with a wondrous hooked bill. Fact says it was a sparrow-hawk. The squirrel fell head over heels among last year's leaves and went out in a whirl, and the jay transplanted down that "ride" without asking questions and faster than you might believe.

The turn at the end of that "ride" was the spot where the dummy figure of the keeper had stood itself, as you may remember. For which reason the jay took the turn closely, lying over on a well-judged curve, and passing within five feet of the lifeless, and, as he thought, harmless thing.

BUT this was no reason at all why, out of the aforesaid dummy, should shoot a stab of flame, which the jay saw, and a most appalling report, which he did not hear, nor why the jay should execute a somersault most ungracefully in mid-air, and land upon his back—dead.

Out of the inside of that hollow dummy strolled a keeper—he 'had only just got in there—with a gun and a pipe, both smoking.

"I reckon," he said, standing above the jay that had been and now was not, "that you be a kind o' jester. So'm I. And I reckon my jest 'as won."

HUMAN VALUES

by Bill Adams

GOD put something into the heart of a man that words do not express. When the writer comes who can explain in a quick and vivid sentence what I see when sitting with a friend, then there won't be any need for men to *try* to write—for the secret secret will have been unlocked.

Apple-trees in Devon's April, and gorse along a Cornish cliff, or sun setting crimson down a lonely sea—a skylark in May, sunshine on the cliffs by Lulworth cove, or violets back of Ventnor—fox cubs playing in the moon by Wisman's wood, and mist low hung above the purple heather——

None of them quite hold the secret held in the eyes of a man.

II

I HAVE no religion save that one that tells a man to *try*—to be a man.

Creeds, doctrines, dogmas—whatever they may be—disgust and weary me beyond all words. I loathe a fetish. I don't suppose any man lives who has been through the mill of wonder and of doubt to a greater extent than I.

The religion that is mine tells me that there isn't any hungry old bum for whom there is no room beneath my roof-tree for a meal and a time of rest and peace—*no questions asked.* When I've got my soul clean it'll be time enough to judge or question any other for anything.

III

OF COURSE, we're human. If we were not we'd not be as we are—none of us quite sure how to live or what next to do. It's only a saint who never has a failing, and I don't want to be a saint. I think that a man needs all of his plain humanity, with a wide knowledge of all of sin and sorrow ere he is fit to be a friend to any other, really worthy of the name.

IV

WELL, we cannot all see every old thing, can we? And after all the beauty of the sea-birds, as the beauty of the song-birds at our meadow sides, and as the flowers of the young spring day, and as all the beauty of the sunrise and the sunset sky, can all be found in the face of one of our fellows who has humanity's lights aglow in his weary face. Isn't that so?

A MANIFEST DESTINY

A Five Part Story Part IV

by Arthur D Howden Smith

Author of "Porto Bello Gold," "Swain's Revenge," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN THE early 'fifties San Francisco seemed civilization's ultimate camping-ground. People the world over were flocking to the city of gold. Transportation was difficult in those days; the overland route was dangerous. The railroad across Panama was tedious and expensive. Most people preferred the canal and railway transit through Nicaragua.

The firm of Morgan and Garrison had wrested control of the Nicaragua transit from Commodore Vanderbilt, and Colonel William Walker, the famous Sonora filibuster, was about the town talking of the "manifest destiny" of the United States to annex Central American territory.

To this town came young Peter Corlaer Ormerod of the New York law firm of Ormerod and Van Ruysdyck, attorneys to the Commodore. He bore a warning and ultimatum from his client to Garrison.

He walked up to a cabby who was busily reading "Pickwick Papers."

"Take me to a good hotel," he said, "but first stop by at the office of Garrison."

"Aha, Ormerod," said the cabby, and, looking up Ormerod recognized Fletcher Cabot whom he had known at Harvard.

Fletcher drove Ormerod to Garrison's and was told to wait. The cabby called on Colonel Walker, advising him that Ormerod was at Garrison's, whither Walker immediately went. The filibuster arrived in the midst of a discussion between Ormerod and Garrison about the situation in Nicaragua. To Ormerod, it seemed from his discussion of the matter that Walker knew the history and situation there from beginning to end.

Walker took Ormerod to Duval's where he lived. There he introduced him to three of his aids: Tom Jenkins, the Viscount de Morbecque, and Captain von Ritterstein. Later Walker expelled two spies of the Nicaragua Legitimist Party from the bar at Duval's. These were an American and an Englishman, Spencer and Webster.

Walker and Ormerod went to dinner where they met Don Jaime and Señorita de Avila, exiles from Nicaragua, nobles of the democrat party, which Walker favored. Ormerod learned that Walker was preparing for a filibustering campaign in Nicaragua to colonize the state and reestablish the democratic party. Walker offered Ormerod a place on his staff.

"I cannot accept until I have completed my business for the Commodore," said the lawyer, "but after that I shall consider it."

That night Ormerod heard cries in the street, as if of some one attacked. Rushing to the vicinity of the shouting, he discovered that Spencer and Webster were attacking Don Jaime and the señorita. Before he could drive them off they managed to wound him in the shoulder, and to knock Don Jaime senseless.

They carried Don Jaime to his rooms and sent for Walker who treated his wounds Along with his other accomplishments, Walker was no mean physician.

Shortly afterward Ormerod set Eastward by the Overland route.

"Will you write to me?" he asked the señorita before he left.

"Yes, my friend," she answered.

ON HIS way to New York he decided definitely that when he had closed his business with the Commodore he would join the force in Nicaragua. His resolution was strengthened when he arrived at home by a letter from the señorita.

"Cabot said that you should be one of us," it read, "I told him that *you were*."

Ormerod called on Vanderbilt to report, and tell him his resolution. He saw Spencer leaving the office.

"The man is a crook and a cheap murderer," he told the Commodore.

"He serves my purposes," answered Vanderbilt, "I am sending him to Nicaragua as a spy."

"I am going to Nicaragua, too," answered Ormerod, "but for a different reason." And he told the Commodore his plans.

Vanderbilt was pleased that the old adventurous blood of the Ormerods had come out in Peter. He believed it to show that the boy had some worth. Not so his partner Dick Van Ruysdyck and Dick's daughter Lydia. They were heartbroken, though Lydia, who was Ormerod's fiancée, did not show it.

At dinner that night at Lydia's there was much discussion of Walker's recent defeat at Rivas by the Legitimists. Ormerod met two Englishmen, one, Salmon, who sneered at Walker's enterprise, and for that matter, at every one and everything. The other was Henningsen, a soldier of fortune, who was anxious to join Walker.

After saying good-by to Lydia and his old house servant Nora, Ormerod set out for the pier to take passage South.

As he walked towards the dock a fireman came running after him calling:

"Misther Ormerod. Misther Ormerod. I hear ye're going ta Nicaragua. Take us with ye."

"I can't, Mike," said Ormerod. "But when I get there and find out how things are, I'll let you know, and you can come down."

"That's what meself will do then," Mike called after him. "Hurroo and hurray. Here's to war."

IT WAS a wet morning when Ormerod arrived at Greytown, Nicaragua. Greytown was the western port of the Transit Company and under the control of the British and the Legitimist party. As Ormerod got off the liner he encountered Jenkins and Cabot who were investigating the enemy port. They boarded another boat for the river route across country. At a stopping-off place Ormerod saved Cabot and Jenkins from being shot by a company of Legitimists under Spencer by pretending to be on the Commodore's business.

When they arrived at Virgin Bay they found horses ready to take them to Walker's headquarters at San Juan Del Sur.

Valle, a native colonel of lancers, rode up to them.

"Ah, Don Tomas," he said, "who ees zis?"

Jenkins told him.

"Welcome, Don Pedro," shouted the old man, "I am Valle, *coronel* of lancers. Zose who lofe me call me Chelon." He embraced Ormerod. "When I steek zem weet' my lance, zey go *pouf!* An' I am always ready for ze fon or ze spree."

They mounted their horses and rode to the filibuster camp. Ormerod saw Walker, and told him of recruiting possibilities in the east, and was made a captain on Walker's staff. As he came from the interview and into the headquarters bar he found Tom Jenkins very drunk. Jenkins tried to bully him but he pinned the Westerner's arms.

"Are you my friend or not, Tom?" he asked.

"If ye don't stand between me'n my likker, y'are," said Jenkins.

"Your liquor has nothing to do with it. If you're my friend you'll come and eat dinner with me. How about it?"

Jenkins went.

"How did you make out with the Colonel?" asked Cabot.

"Pretty well. He took me on the staff. Captain." Cabot lifted his glass.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I give you Captain Ormerod of the staff."

They drank, bottoms up.

A WEEK later Walker informed Ormerod that they should advance on Granada, chief city of Nicaragua, immediately. He introduced him to Don Rafael Canedo, a cousin of the de Avilas and a democratic leader. Ormerod thought he detected a note of hostility in the Nicaraguan's manner.

After a forced march they attacked Granada. The move was totally unexpected by the Legitimists, and they captured the city without much loss. Walker ordered that there should be no looting. Cabot and Jenkins captured Webster, but Walker released and deported him on Ormerod's advice, lest the enmity of the spy's British countrymen be incurred.

IN REPRISAL the Legitimists immediately attacked Leon; whereat Walker shot one of their chief men. The frightened Legitimists sent their general, Corral, to sue for terms. A peace was declared. A conservative and mild Legitimist, Don Patricio Rivas was made president of the new republic, Corral was secretary of war—but the post of commander-in-chief, Walker reserved for himself.

Don Jaime, the señorita and Raphael Canedo, came from Leon with news that Corral was plotting with the Leonese against the existing Government.

"Teach a tiger to tend cattle, and teach a *blanco* to keep faith," said Canedo.

Walker had Corral tried by a military court and shot.

Ormerod went to dinner with Don Jaime and the señorita at the Casa de Avila. Afterwards, walking in the garden with the señorita, he embraced her.

"No, no, Peter," she cried, "now is no time for love-making. How ever we may feel toward each other, it is Nicaragua to whom we have dedicated ourselves."

Walker sent Ormerod back to New York on a recruiting expedition. He had nearly persuaded the Commodore to throw his money and influence with Walker when he received a letter from his commander saying that he had already made an arrangement with Morgan and Garrison. The letter also enclosed Ormerod's commision as Colonel.

Vandervilt was furious, and Ormerod felt that this letter sounded the knell of the filibuster's cause. However he continued his recruiting, made a trip to Washington where he discovered the administration friendly to Walker, and managed to transport troops to Nicaragua in spite of the Commodore's withdrawal of his steamships.

Then he returned himself, as Costa Rica had declared war on Walker.

He found the general ready to march on the Costa Ricans. Don Rafael showed signs of annoyance and anger at the Americans.

He met the señorita.

"I feared you would not come back," she said.

"But I had to come back—to you," he answered.

"Oh, Peter," she cried, "I shall tell my beads for you, day and night. If only we did not have Nicaragua to consider—"

III

TWO days and nights of footslogging over hot and dusty roads brought Walker's slender force into position outside Rivas at dawn of April 11th. Their advance had been covered by a screen of Rangers and lancers, and the Costa Ricans, secure behind their barricades, had no inkling of the impending attack. Who would expect even the mad *Yanquis* to fling some six hundred men, without artillery, against three thousand protected by adobe walls and supported by cannon? *Valgame Dios!* It was unthinkable. So the sentries of the invaders were taken completely by surprize when the deep-chested American cheer resounded above the crackle of rifle-fire, and the assaulting columns dashed out of the plantain thickets into the main streets leading to the Plaza, the usual citadel of any Central American city.

Ormerod, as aide to Walker, charged with the First Rifles, under Colonel Sanders, in the center of the line. They rushed the streets debouching on the north and south sides of the Plaza, and took two guns at the barricades, which they moved forward to bear upon the enemy in the western quarter of the city, supposed to have been entered by a column of native troops under Valle. But the old Indian was shot from his horse, badly wounded, and despite his cursing and adjurations, the Nicaraguans broke and fled, leaving the right flank of the Americans in the air. Sanders' position was complicated further by the delay in bringing up the captured guns, which gave the Costa Ricans an opportunity to rally from the first shock of the attack, with the consequence that when the Americans attempted to push on they were beaten back by a storm of musketry from the thick-walled buildings on either side of the streets west and south of the Plaza.

Fortunately, the Second Rifles, under von Ritterstein, forming the left wing, had swept all before them, and gained the eastern side of the Plaza in time to cover the retirement of the First Rifles into the buildings that bordered the Plaza's other three faces. Von Ritterstein seized the cathedral at once, and occupied its towers, whence his picked marksmen carried death and terror into the ranks of the enemy, who had commenced to pluck up their courage after stemming Sanders' advance.

The roll of musketry, the sharp, ringing reports of rifles, the booming of cannon, were continuous. Clouds of smoke and dust billowed over the Plaza. From the remoter parts of the town came the thudding of drums and shrilling of bugles as the Costa Ricans got their men under arms. The sun beat down hotter and hotter. Men sweated and swore as they hacked loopholes in adobe walls or built barricades. Flies buzzed nastily around the bodies strewn across the street openings, and the wounded cried for water.

Ormerod, laboring with a bewildered lieutenant to get one of the Rifle companies under adequate shelter, grasped that this was his first real battle, and felt a little sick to his stomach. The capture of Granada had been child's play by comparison.

"Oh,——! Oh, ——!" chattered the lieutenant. "*Will* you men work faster? It's your lives you'll lose, you know."

"I wouldn't talk to them like that, Lieutenant," Ormerod was surprized to hear himself saying kindly. "Cheer them up a little. That's the idea."

And to the men:

"Here, you fellows, put your backs under these stones. There's a cart under that shed. Run it out. That's it. Turn it up. The general will be along presently, and we——"

A hand clamped on to his shoulder, and he stared into the face of Sanders, powder-stained and glistening with sweat.

"You're doing good work, Ormerod," croaked the Rifleman; "but I must send you back to General Walker. He expected us to drive across the Plaza, and here we are pinned down in it, by ——! He'll have to order up Fry and the infantry. They're in reserve. I don't know whether it's possible to do any more, but we should try."

Bullets flicked the sand around Ormerod as he traversed the Plaza, but he came unhurt to where Walker sat his horse impassively at the head of a column consisting of the First Infantry and a handful of Jenkins' Rangers in one of the streets which had been cleared by the first rush of the Rifles. The general heard Sanders' appeal without comment.

"Very good, Colonel Ormerod," he said quietly. "I am told, too, that Valle's column has been dispersed?"

"Yes, General."

"We must set things straight." Walker turned to Colonel Fry, who was tugging impatiently at his bridle, eager to be off. "You may take your men forward, Colonel. I am coming with you."

Fry raised his sword in salute.

"Attention, men! Quickstep! Forward —march!"

A hoarse cheer responded from the ranks, and a hail of tobacco "chaws" bombarded the adjacent house-walls. Falling in behind the general and Fry, Ormerod heard his name called:

"Misther Payter! Och, 'tis Colonel I mane."

Mike Gilligan ranged alongside of him, freckled face a broad grin, a sword in one hand and a big Colt in the other.

"Shure, sorr, this do be the length of a pig's tail betther nor runnin' wid the injines."

"You're likely to get more than a black eye out of it, Mike," warned Ormerod.

"Ah, well, there's a price for every divarsion," returned the Irishman liberally. And over his shoulder, with a touch of importance, "Close up, min. Cohen, ye dirrty spalpeen, ye've lost the cap from yer piece. How often—"

The column passed from the street into the Plaza, and Cohen, precursor of millions of his race in the New World, pitched out of ranks with a bullet in his heart.

"God be good to him," gasped Mike. "Shure, maany's the time I tould him he'd come to harrm for lavin' his nipple uncapped."

"Open up your ranks," answered Ormerod. And not waiting for Fry to perceive the danger of the column's close formation, the New Yorker shouted, "In open order, companies! Open up, back there. Spread out!"

Walker, riding calmly in the midst of the sudden tempest of lead, looked back to nod approval.

"Quite right, Colonel. A little faster, men."

The Rifles did what they could to keep down the enemy's fire, but the infantry paid a stiff price for their brief passage of the Plaza, and reached the line of Sanders' barricades blown and shaken. Fry, peering up the perspective of squatly massive houses, each a fortress by itself, spurting flame, wagged his head unhappily.

"I'm afraid it's utterly impracticable to carry those streets, General," he said. "If we had artillery—"

"We took a couple of six-pounders," said Sanders; "but they're too light to breach walls, and we haven't much ammunition, anyway."

"We must exploit our advantage before the enemy are reinforced from Virgin Bay and San Juan del Sur, gentlemen," replied Walker with the bleak manner he showed toward any contrary opinion.

"Its impracticable, General," declared Fry again. "Butchery! I wouldn't be responsible for my men's lives."

And Sanders corroborated the infantryman:

"When I sent Colonel Ormerod back to you, sir, I thought we might stand some chance of shoving on; but they've brought up more men, and they seem to have a considerable number of sharpshooters—foreigners, I should say."

"If we stay here," Walker retorted sharply, "we shall simply subject ourselves to being besieged in the Plaza. We *must* advance."

He urged his horse into the middle of the street, regardless of the bullets which covered him with dirt and chunks of adobe.

"Volunteers to drive back the enemy," he shouted. "Who volunteers? I'll go with you, men."

Ormerod sprang forward, Jenkins at his elbow, Mike Gilligan not a pace behind. So did Major Markham of the infantry, Captain Linton, Lieutenant Jamison and twenty-eight men.

Walker pointed his sword over the low barricade.

"That's your path, men," he cried, and started to leap his horse, but Ormerod, Jenkins, Fry, Sanders and half a dozen other officers clutched at his bridle.

"If you're shot, what would we do, General?" they cried. "Let the volunteers try."

"We'll go on if the volunteers succeed," promised Fry.

Walker made a gesture of assent, and dismounted.

"You are in the right," he said. "Do what you can, Colonel Ormerod. We will support you."

Ormerod led his forlorn hope forward in two files, hugging the house-walls and crouching low, so that their comrades behind them and the Rifles who had gained

the roofs of the houses that rimmed the Plaza could fire over their heads at the doors and windows of the buildings occupied by the Costa Ricans. The Rifles, indeed, seeing what was up and rested from the first efforts of the attack, commenced to dribble to their assistance, dropping off roofs, crawling out of doors and alleyways. For a while it looked as if the Americans would succeed. House after house they cleared, regardless of their losses. Captain McArdle, of the Rifles, thrusting his pistol around the corner of a doorway, received a bayonet thrust through his forearm as he fired, and an instant later a dozen musket-balls from the house's garrison shot off the limb at the elbow. Staggering against the lintel, McArdle withdrew the spouting stump and hailed his companions:

"The —— rascals got my pistol. Come on, boys, I—"

He fell as the Americans charged by him.

That was the limit of the forlorn hope's advance. Linton was also dead, two more officers were wounded, half the men were down, and reluctantly, Ormerod brought off the remainder, carrying their wounded with them and fetching along, too, an ammunition wagon of one of the guns Sanders had captured.

Walker met them at the barricade, as undisturbed as if everything had gone as he desired.

"That was very well done, Colonel Ormerod. I am pleased with you, men. You did all that you could. Now, then, gentlemen, we must secure ourselves, at least. The enemy will be encouraged to counter-attack, and I want to be sure that every house fronting on the Plaza is adequately held. The day is young yet."

His imperturbability had its effect. Tired troops, who had propped their weapons against the house-walls and thrown themselves flat in the gutters, regardless of their officers' commands, willingly resumed the duties to which he summoned them. A degree of order was secured; zones of defense were plotted; detachments assigned for various points. The wounded were collected, and a hospital organized in a dry-goods store at the northwest corner of the Plaza. Jenkins was sent off to take command of the cathedral. The horses of the officers and Rangers were withdrawn behind that structure out of range of the enemy's fire. And gradually confidence was restored.

The Plaza had become a citadel, isolated in the midst of the hostile town.

The weak point of the position was the northwest corner where the hospital had been established; the Costa Ricans had built no barricade on this side, and the Americans were in difficulties until Ormerod discovered a stack of huge blocks of what he supposed to be stone in a nearby storehouse. They turned out to be *quesas*, hard Spanish cheeses, but they made as effective a barrier as stones. There were tons of them, and von Ritterstein's Rifles, who lay behind them, satisfied their occasional hunger by carving chunks from the barricade with bowie-knives.

It was now close to noon, and after inspecting the lines of defense, Walker paid a

visit to the hospital, where twenty wounded men had been gathered. Ormerod observed with interest how the impersonal air of the soldier dropped from him as he entered the place of suffering. He became cheery and friendly, discussed the more dangerous cases with the attending surgeons, revealing a keen perception of technical matters, examined wounds, adjusted bandages, made the beds of several men more comfortable, and sat a few minutes on a bale of cloth to talk to them.

"We are managing very well," he told them. "I should have liked to clear the

town at the first rush, but as it is, we are excellently fortified, and have already done greater damage to the enemy than they have to us."

Outside the hospital again, de Morbecque halted Walker to offer him a drink from a bottle of bitters the Frenchman had found in one of the shops his company had occupied.

"You mus' be thirsty, *mon général*," he said. "We 'ave a warm day, *hein?* And warm work—*n'est ce pas?*"

"Thank you, Viscount," answered Walker. "Are you sure you have any to spare?"

"Oh, plenty."

Walker took a drink, and then de Morbecque extended the bottle to Ormerod.

"You, too, *M'sieu le Colonel.*"

A bullet spurted in the dust by the Frenchman's heel, and Ormerod said uneasily:

"We ought to get under cover, General. Somebody has marked us down."

"Finish your drink, sir," advised Walker.

"*Oui, oui,*" exclaimed de Morbecque. "I 'ave nevaire been far from a bullet since we came into thees —— place."

Ormerod drank hastily, as fearful for the others as for himself, and returned the bottle to de Morbecque, who threw back his head and set it to his lips. Phut! And the Frenchman coughed as his neck gushed blood; he tottered, the bottle still raised in one hand.

"*Nomme de Dieu*"! he whispered. "How *gauche!* I nevaire 'ad a drink interrupt' so discourteous'."

Ormerod caught him as he collapsed, and Walker stooped to examine the wound.

"The thyroid cartilege is cut away," pronounced the general. "Carry him into the hospital, please, Colonel. This is my fault. You were entirely correct to suggest that we get under cover. We must caution all to expose themselves as little as possible."

Returning from the hospital, Ormerod accompanied Walker through an arcade which partially fronted one side of the Plaza. Ensconced behind a big wooden pillar was a lank Arkansan of the Second Rifles, who fired as fast as two comrades could load for him.

"What luck?" asked Walker.

The man grinned.

"Howdy, General! Why, I'm doin' tol'ble. Reckon I got mebbe ten or a dozen greasers, but thar's one sow-snouted son of a somethin'-or-other— Dear ——, gimme thatair shootin' iron, Sim! He's drawin' a bead out that windy, now."

A rifle was passed to the Arkansan, and he lifted it to his shoulder, cuddling the stock while his eye glanced along the sights and his finger squeezed gently on the trigger.

"See him?" breathed Sim.

No answer. Ormerod felt the gooseflesh quivering on his back, the fever of the manhunt. Even Walker's face betrayed curiosity.

Then—*crack!* The vault of the arcade reechoed the rifle's report.

"By gum, I ketched him!" exulted the rifleman.

"Good shooting," approved Walker.

A shout came from the Plaza.

"Where's the general? A message for the general!"

It was Cabot, running for all he was worth from the direction of the cathedral. Ormerod stepped out between the pillars and called him in.

"This way, Cabot. In here."

A minute afterward the ex-cabby was panting in front of Walker.

"Major Jenkins' compliments, sir, and his riflemen in the towers report concentrations of the enemy on the north and west sides of the town. A very large column of reinforcements is coming in from the direction of Virgin Bay. Almost a thousand men, we think."

"Thank you, Captain," Walker acknowledged coolly. "I expected all this. Colonel Ormerod, I wish you would carry the word to Colonel von Ritterstein. I will ask Captain Cabot to communicate with Colonel Sanders. Tell them to order their men to withhold firing until they can make their shots effective."

IV

"*MUERAN a los Yanquis!*" yelped the Costa Ricans as they hurled themselves at the barricades, loose columns of white-clad figures, dim in the swirling smoke and dust —animated monkeys, thought Ormerod, as he aimed and fired, aimed and fired, with a dead man's rifle. Brave monkeys, though, with the wizened faces and dwarfed bodies of precocious children. They reared ladders against roofs, pounded in doors and windows with their musket-butts, pitted their bayonets against the deadly Colt.

From the south, from the north and from the west they came, thousands of diminutive, agile figures, hopping and scrambling across the roofs, dodging and skipping along the narrow streets. The eastern side of the American position, dominated by the bulk of the cathedral, they let alone; indeed, there were no Costa Ricans left in that quarter of Rivas. Their attack from the south was only a feint. But from the north and west they made a series of determined assaults over a period of two hours, undaunted by severe losses.

In the beginning they drove hardest at the western flank of the defenses, but after a while they shifted their forces, abandoned the attack from the south altogether, and delivered a sudden thrust which burst into one of the houses on the north side of the Plaza, breaching the American position. Ormerod learned what had happened when Costa Rican bullets began to plunk into the barrier of cheeses behind which he lay with von Ritterstein's Rifles at the northwest corner of the Plaza.

A young lieutenant named Gay ran by at that moment.

"We've got to drive out those greasers," he shouted. "Who'll come along?"

Ormerod leaped up. Mike Gilligan sprang from nowhere. A little group of thirteen gathered around Gay, ten officers, most of them senior to him, and three privates.

"Who commands?" asked Gay.

Ormerod smiled at another member of Walker's staff, Major Rogers, the *Confiscator-general*, who smiled back.

"It was your idea, Gay," said Rogers. "We're proud to follow you."

The youngster waved his revolver toward their objective.

"You won't be sorry, gentlemen," he promised. "Over Jordan, then."

Their charge took the Costa Ricans by surprize; the sheer audacity of it petrified opponents who outnumbered them twenty to one. Colts spitting fire, they drove the enemy from room after room, and not content with carrying the house, pushed on and cleared a large walled area behind it. Gay dropped in the open, with a smile on his face, his last act to pull the trigger of his revolver. Half the rest were dead, and of the living all except Gilligan were wounded, Ormerod with a ball in the calf of one leg; but they had killed thirty Costa Ricans among them, and made good the position until Walker could bring up a company to hold it.

This was the crisis of the afternoon. The Costa Ricans continued to attack sporadically, but they never again showed the determination which Gay's reckless charge had crushed; and the Americans were able to take a breathing-spell, satisfy hunger and thirst, care for their wounded and repair gaps in the defenses.

Ormerod lingered in the house he had helped to recapture, supervising the disposition of the bodies of the fallen. While he and Mike were occupied so, Walker came in.

"I hear Lieutenant Gay is dead," said the general.

"Yes, sir," replied Ormerod. "Here he is."

Walker bent over the calm young face, still smiling with the joy of battle.

"May God receive his soul," he said soberly. "Remind me to write to his family, Colonel Ormerod."

He rose, and perceiving the blood-soaked trouser on Ormerod's left leg, exclaimed:

"But you are wounded, sir?"

"Nothing serious, General."

"Nonsense, any gunshot wound is serious, unless attended to. I have lost too many of my officers in this day's work. Go over to the hospital, and have it dressed."

Ormerod saluted, and started to limp to the door. Walker motioned Gilligan to attend him.

"Go with the colonel, Lieutenant," he ordered. "His leg may fail him."

"Troth, and I'll see himself accrost, General, sorr," returned Mike.

The Plaza outside was deserted, save for the solitary figure of Cabot, sauntering on some errand to the cathedral. The Costa Ricans were firing madly, apparently in the supposition that the Americans might be disposed to launch a counter-attack, and little jets of dust revealed where bullets were striking on every side of the Bostonian. But Cabot strolled along, puffing at a big *cigarro* he had looted from some shop.

"He shouldn't be so foolish," exclaimed Ormerod.

"Ah, well, maybe 'tis his way of findin' enjoyment," remarked Mike, lenient where danger was concerned. "Will we walk 'round by the long way, then, yer honor?"

"We will," decided Ormerod.

There was a certain amount of danger in hugging the house-walls, where they were not arcaded, but nothing like the risk involved in crossing the open expanse of the

Plaza, and Ormerod's wounded leg was not as spry as he might have wished. He and Mike had ducked by the fronts of several houses when an exclamation escaped the Irishman.

"Begob, he's down!"

"Who?" cried Ormerod, but he knew before a rifleman at a near-by window yelled, "The hellions got Fletch!"

Cabot was a crumpled heap in the sand, the *cigarro* smoking lazily where it had fallen.

"What a shame," gasped Ormerod.

Gilligan prodded him in the ribs.

"He's movin', Misther Payter! Look to the arrm of him!"

"We must carry him safe," decided Ormerod. "Come along, Mike, you'll have to help me."

"Sure, that same is me pleasure," grinned Mike. And they trotted out into the sun-smitten waste, their appearance the signal for a crescendo of firing, the dust from striking bullets so dense that once they lost sight of Cabot. He was conscious when they reached him, although his forehead was beaded with the sweat of agony.

"What? You, Ormerod?" he said weakly. "Good of you—my dear fellow—but no use."

"Are you hurt badly?" asked Ormerod as Mike crossed himself and muttered a "Hail, Mary."

"In the spine," answered Cabot briefly. "Move my arms—not my legs. Here! What—what—"

Ormerod leaned over, and hooked one of the ex-cabby's arms around his own neck, while he slipped a hand beneath the paralyzed thighs.

"Quick, Mike!" snapped Ormerod. "Make a chair for him. We've got to hurry, if we—"

"Glory be, 'tis yerself has the quick wit," mumbled Gilligan, following suit. "Bad luck to thim bloody spalpeens! They do be spurtin' the dirrt in me eyes that baad I can't see me way."

The three staggered off at a hobbling run, Ormerod's crippled leg yielding ominously at every step, bullets drumming around them in a leaden hail. But a hoarse cheer rose as their comrades saw what they were doing, and a hundred Americans ran to meet them. Cabot was seized by a pair of brawny riflemen; Ormerod was provided with a sturdy shoulder to crutch himself with; and such a tornado of fire was opened upon the Costa Ricans that the enemy cowered under cover, fearful again lest the dreaded *Yanquis* prepared for another charge.

Safe in the hospital, Ormerod was thankful to rest while the surgeons probed at Cabot's wound—the poor fellow had fainted from the pain of the rough handling they had been unable to avoid. And the medicos, curt, frontier practitioners, gave him little hope for his friend when they came to dress his leg.

"Minie ball through the hips," one said shortly. "Binged into his spine some way."

"Can you fix him up?" questioned Ormerod.

"If we could move him, yes—but I don't know whether he'll ever walk again."

Those words "if we could move him" turned Ormerod's mind to consideration of the American's present situation. If they had beaten off the attacks of the Costa Ricans, the Costa Ricans had been as successful with them. And there was the question of ammunition. The action had been very wasteful of powder and ball, and Ormerod knew that the reserve supply with the pack-train was not as generous as Walker would have preferred, even before they had marched from Granada. So as soon as his leg was bandaged he hastened in search of his chief.

Walker was in the arcade which sheltered the Arkansas sharpshooter, and passing the riflemen, Ormerod inquired smilingly—

"What's your score?"

The Arkansan spat leisurely.

"Reckon it mought be forty—mebbe a few more."

"No!"

"I don't calc'late to claim no ha'ar I cain't prove I done took, Cunnel."

And one of his attendants spoke up:

"Rorty done the best shootin' I ever seed today, mister. He's fired off all the ca'tridges he brung, and all o' Sim's and mine, 'scusin' seven."

Seven cartridges left among three men! Walker must know of this. And Ormerod limped on to the doorway in which the general was talking with Sanders.

"Have you checked up on the ammunition remaining, General?" Ormerod asked bluntly.

"I make no doubt our stores are low," Walker answered easily.

"I've just talked with three of Colonel Sanders' men who have seven cartridges between them."

"That's bad," Walker admitted. "We have a fair reserve in the cathedral, but not enough for another day such as this has been."

"Then we shall have to retreat?"

Ormerod's heart sank.

"I have been discussing my future plans with Colonel Sanders," drawled Walker. "It is my intention to hang on here until midnight, and then withdraw."

Sanders was digging in the dirt with the point of his sword; his sadness was obvious. Ormerod sank dazedly on the doorstep.

"It seemed as though we did all we could," he said.

"We have done everything possible," Walker assented kindly. "If Valle's men had not been dispersed; if Sanders' men had not stopped to drag forward those guns—But it is futile to speak of 'ifs'. We face accomplished facts. After all, we shall have won to our principal purpose, which—"

A cloud of smoke towered aloft on the northern side of the Plaza, and firing broke out once more in that quarter with redoubled fury.

"The greasers are burnin' the houses," came the cry from the end of the arcade.

Walker bestowed a keen glance in the direction indicated.

"We may have to evacuate those buildings sooner than I had anticipated," he remarked. "Can you walk, Colonel Ormerod? Very good! I want you to see that the men are withdrawn from that part of the line as it becomes necessary. I will be responsible for the removal of the wounded. If we can maintain our present position until dusk we will concentrate our strength in the cathedral, and make ready to retire whenever it is convenient."

Ormerod saluted dispiritedly.

"Don't be downhearted, Colonel," added Walker. "Remember, we have hit the enemy a very shrewd blow. A town more or less is useless to us; but I question strongly whether the Costa Ricans will long survive the injury we have done them. Those streets to the north and south are full of their dead."

"Yes, General," said Ormerod, and he saluted again, "yes."

But as he walked away he found it difficult to heed Walker's admonition. "Don't be downhearted"—somehow a meaningless gesture of comfort when considered what this evacuation must mean.

V

TWILIGHT, and then, with the precipitance of the tropics, night; the darkness shutting down as abruptly as if a velvet pall had dropped from the lowering skies. Smoke from the burning buildings drifted across the Plaza, intensifying the gloom, which was relieved only by the orange glare of the flames and the sparks that pranced aloft whenever a roof fell in. The firing had become desultory, and the soldiers on both sides were too tired to raise their voices.

It seemed to Ormerod, lying under the wall of one of the shops the enemy had kindled, that the hours were weighted with the lead that had sped back and forth all day long. His leg throbbed, his muscles ached, his eyes were heavy with sleeplessness. At intervals he exchanged whispered comments with von Ritterstein, the big German as saturnine as ever, or ordered the prostrate riflemen to rake some patch of shadows where steel glimmered or muskets torched in evidence that the Costa Ricans were creeping closer. Behind them they could hear the pattering of feet in the Plaza, repressed voices, the groans of the wounded being carried to the cathedral.

Once von Ritterstein stirred uneasily.

"I t'ought I heardt Louis' voice," he muttered.

Ormerod shook his head.

"He can't speak above a whisper."

"Is he so badt?"

"I don't know. He bled a lot."

"Ach!"

A figure crawled out of an arcade on their right.

"Misther Payter! Colonel, sorr!"

Ormerod turned his head.

"That you, Mike?"

"Yes, sorr. The general says for you to be afther bringin' off yer min."

At last! The word passed cautiously along the tenuous line. Grunts of satisfaction, a subdued rattling of equipments, feet shush-shushing in the sand. Midway of the Plaza other groups joined theirs as the southern and western sides were evacuated. An outpost in front of the cathedral challenged them, and Ormerod wondered

why the enemy did not discover the movement. But the smoke and the darkness furnished a perfect screen, and the Costa Ricans were exhausted by their endeavors and discouraged by slaughter.

The cathedral's interior was dim, except for a space behind the altar-screen, where tall mass-candles burned and the surgeons flitted to and fro among the wounded. Walker stood by the door, a spectral, half seen figure, reviewing the ragged ghosts that stole past him, a little knot of officers closing the procession.

"All in?" he asked.

Jenkins, beside him, peered out down the steps.

"I reckon yes, General," said the scout.

"Bar the doors, then." He turned to the hundreds of men who had squatted or lain down in the generous vista of the nave. "I want you men to know that I am satisfied with what you have done. No cheering, please! The quieter we are, the more chance we shall have of eluding the enemy."

"We ain't gwine ter pull our freight, General?" exclaimed a voice from a side-altar.

"We have three rounds of ammunition per man left," answered Walker. "If we had a proper allowance in reserve I would stay until the enemy were compelled to retreat. I know another day like this would take the fight out of them. You know it, too. But fortune is against us, to that extent. We'll draw off, with the satisfaction of having thrashed five or six times our numbers and crippled the Costa Ricans so severely that we shan't need to regard them as a menace henceforth."

He paused, and Ormerod thought that a spasm twitched his cheek-muscles; but when he continued his drawl was unbroken.

"We must leave many of our comrades behind us, some of them dead, some wounded so that the surgeons say they could not bear removal. I have explained our situation to these men, and asked them whether we should stay here by them—in which case we should all be destroyed—or retreat. They said, 'Never mind us, general. Save the army.' "

A choking sigh escaped from the rough, dirty, unshaven band huddled in the nave.

"Words are useless in characterizing the devotion of such men," Walker went on. "The highest tribute we can pay them is to remember their spirit, and let it guide us to complete victory in the future.

"That is all I have to say. Major Jenkins has provided enough horses for the transport of those wounded who can be moved, but are unable to walk. We shall march after midnight. In the meantime, those who can had best sleep. Major Jenkins will command the main guard; sufficient men have volunteered for this duty."

Again that choking sigh echoed through the nave.

"We-uns is with yo', Gen'al." "We won't forget, sir." "That's the Gawd's truth." "Shore, we'll lick 'em yet." "We're the b'ys 'll stay by ye."

A number of men knelt at the side-altars, and Walker, himself, retired into one of the chapels. Ormerod found him a moment later, absorbed in a missal-book.

"Ah, Colonel! Can't you sleep?"

"Isn't there anything—"

"No, no! Sleep. You'll need the rest tomorrow, a hard march, I fear."

Ormerod saluted, and started to withdraw, but Walker detained him as he reached the chapel door.

"Are you religious, Colonel Ormerod?"

"Moderately so, sir," Ormerod answered wearily.

"Ah, yes!" Walker tapped the missal-book. "A man requires spiritual conviction in a time like this. I was bred up a Protestant, but there is a quality of definiteness in Catholicism which is very satisfying. Definiteness cloaked in mysticism—a remarkable combination. Take this church. It has been the center of carnal strife; men have died in it; hate radiates from it, and beats upon it from without. Yet its essential majesty is undiminished. You can feel that God is here. In some way we serve— But you must have rest, physical rest, eh? You are in no mood for philosophical dialectics, I see. Lie down here, and I'll rouse you when the time comes."

Ormerod assented gratefully, and flung himself upon the bare stones of the floor; a cool night-breeze, the faithful breath of the trades, wandered in the broken windows; the candle guttered crazily, and Walker bent nearer to it, his eyes fastened upon the Latin of his book. By ——, the man might have been in his private chapel-of-ease! He was entirely regardless of the situation. Bullets rapped into the walls, glass tinkled in atoms, one of the bells in the towers went *bong* as a shot struck it. But Walker read on, pondering the psychological

appeal of a religion he must reckon with in his dreams of conquest.

When Ormerod became conscious again the filibuster chief was patting his shoulder.

"I am sorry, Colonel, but I must waken you. We are preparing to evacuate, and I want you to take command of the wounded. Get them out by the rear door; you'll find horses for them there. Your place will be in the center of the column, immediately behind the Second Rifles."

All over the dark interior of the cathedral officers were prodding men awake, some poor fellows so dead with sleep that they had to be jabbed with swordpoints before they would open their eyes. Ormerod picked his way between the yawning groups to the illuminated area beneath the high altar where the wounded had been gathered. The surgeons were still busy, making as comfortable as possible the men who could be moved, doing little final services for those who must be abandoned. Moses, the chief surgeon, a boney, square-jawed, Southern Jew, as tireless as Walker himself, after sixteen hours of unremitting labor, briefly indicated to Ormerod the company he was to command, some sixty in number.

"Nearly half of 'em can walk. Don't let any malingerers fool you. The horses are for men like yourself with leg wounds. We don't dare to move any abdominal injuries; it's kinder to leave 'em to the Costa Rican bayonets."

A subdued sound of laughter came from the other side of the altar.

"What's that?" exclaimed Ormerod, irritated by such lack of feeling. "I'll shoot the cur!"

Moses grinned.

"Oh, that's Captain Cabot. He's saying good-by to Major Jenkins, he and de Morbecque."

Tiny black specks bounced in front of Ormerod's eyes. The surgeon grasped his arm.

"Watch out, Colonel! Here, drink this brandy. It can't be helped, you know—leaving these wounded men. We'd kill 'em sure, if we tried to move them. Cabot's paralyzed below the waist, de Morbecque has a hole in his neck, the rest of 'em are worse. Some won't live out the night. There's a chance, of course, the Costa Ricans—"

A graphic gesture filled in his sentence. Ormerod recovered his self-command.

"Look here, Doctor," he said, "get my detachment outside, will you, you and your assistants? I want to—to—"

He gulped, and pointed to the other side of the altar.

"Surely," the Jew agreed readily. "Glad to."

Ormerod stumbled around a screen, which had been rigged out of vestments and altar-cloths, and bumped into Jenkins, backing toward him. The frontiersman pivoted, and regarded him stonily.

"Who the —— Oh, you, Pete! Gawd! We're aleavin' Fletch and Louis."

And Jenkins fled, as Ormerod stepped into a recess brilliantly lighted by slim altar-candles.

"Hullo, there," Cabot's voice greeted him. "In the words of the immortal Sam, I say to this municipality of Rivas, 'Vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin', Sam Veller sticks by you, come what may; and let ev'rythin' and ev'rybody do their wery fiercest, nothin' shall ever perwent it.' No, not even Señor Mora and all his *valiantes!*"

Ormerod blinked, and as his eyes became accustomed to the illumination, he saw a couple of rows of quiet figures lying on rude pallets on the stone floor. Cabot and de Morbecque were side by side. Cabot had his copy of "Pickwick Papers" spread open on his lap, and his back was propped up so that he could see to read; within reach of his right hand lay a cocked revolver. De Morbecque, much weaker, lay almost prostrate, his face bloodless, a ruddy bandage wrapped around his throat, only the fire in his handsome eyes telling of the dauntless spirit that persisted in his battered frame. His lips also moved in a whisper, which Ormerod bent to catch:

"Carl? 'E is well?"

Ormerod nodded.

"*Bien!*"

A huge shadow inclined over Ormerod's shoulder, and von Ritterstein dropped on his knees beside the Frenchman's pallet.

"I march mit der advance-guard, Louis," he said simply.

De Morbecque's hand fluttered to meet his.

"*C'est bien, mon ami. Adieu!*"

"*Ach, Gott!*"

The words were torn out of von Ritterstein's throat.

"For a ver' leettle time we parrt," murmured the Frenchman. "Me, I do not believe in 'Eaven, but Valhalla. *Oui!* Zhere we all come, Carl—an' we fight battles mos' grrran', *hein?*"

The German stooped lower, and kissed the white forehead, with a guttural rush of words. Then he was gone.

One of the men in the next row, whose lips became flecked with bloody foam as he spoke, remarked complainingly—

"I reckon you-all mean well, Cunnell, suh, but the Cap'n was gwine to read to we-uns when you come in."

"I'm sorry," Ormerod apologized quickly. "Can I do anything for you, Cabot?"

The Bostonian shook his head.

"No, thanks, unless you find an opportunity to tell my family that I didn't altogether disgrace them."

"I will," Ormerod promised. "But don't you think we could move you some way? I'll see Moses again, and—"

"Not a chance," denied Cabot. "I'm no good from the waist down—and I don't want to live like that. Besides, I wouldn't leave Louis, here. We've been pardners, he and I, ever since we came out. No, it's better this way, Ormerod; but I appreciate your kindness just the same."

"I wish you-all 'ud jest let the Cap'n read out o' thatair Pickwick book," whined the man with the bloody froth on his mouth.

A jet of crimson trickled out of one corner as he coughed.

A second man, whose head tossed restlessly from side to side, added:

"Yessir. Let the Cap'n read 'bout how they spent Christmas. Jiminy, mates, think o' Christmas!"

Cabot gave Ormerod an apologetic glance, and flipped the pages.

"We'll begin with the ride on the coach," he said. "Do you remember? They were waiting in the inn-yard in the cold—"

"Cripes!" said the man whose head rolled from side to side. "Think o' bein' cold!"

"*Tres jolie,*" murmured de Morbecque.

Ormerod dashed his hand across his eyes, and blundered around the gaudy screen; Cabot's voice—its unctuous modulations tripped now and again by a little gasp of pain—pursued him:

"The portmanteaus and carpet-bags have been stowed away, and Mr. Weller and the guard are endeavoring to insinuate into the fore-boot a huge cod-fish several sizes too large for it, which is snugly packed up, in a long brown basket, with a layer of straw over the top, and which has been left to the last, in order that he may repose in safety on the half-dozen barrels of real native oysters, all the property of Mr. Pickwick, which have been arranged in regular order, at the bottom of the receptacle. The interest displayed in Mr. Pickwick's countenance is most intense, as Mr. Weller and the guard try to squeeze the cod-fish into the boot, first head first, and then tail first, and then top upwards and then bottom upwards, and then sideways—"

In the echoing vastness of the sanctuary the trickle of words was swallowed up; the muttering of troops moving into the street replaced it. Overhead one of the bells tolled as a bullet struck it—*bong!* Ormerod pushed his way hastily out the sacristy door, glad of the trade-wind on his brow, glad of the responsibility he must assume. Bong! tolled the bell again.

Two weeks later a Costa Rican prisoner, half frantic with fear, told how Cabot had died, pulling the trigger of his Colt until the last cartridge was fired as the invaders' bayonets drove home in his crippled body. De Morbecque had been able to fire but once before his own blood choked him. That had been a red morning in Rivas Cathedral.

VI

THE filibuster army reentered Granada, shattered, but proud and defiant, and Granada received them with cheering street-crowds, with clamoring joy-bells, with roaring sky-rockets. They had lost fifty-eight killed and sixty-two wounded out of less than six hundred Walker had led into action; but the Costa Ricans buried two hundred, and four hundred wounded dismayed the survivors and bred pestilence amongst them. The dreaded *colerin* appeared, both at Granada and Rivas; but its ravages were very different in the two cities, In Granada it was checked by modern medical methods; in Rivas it ran riot. Unburied dead, festering wounded, aided its propagation. The disheartening experiences of the soldiers made them ready victims to it, and they sickened and died by hundreds. Within two weeks they were in retreat.

Walker, reinforced by a draft of two hundred recruits Hornsby brought from New York on the first steamer of the new Morgan and Garrison line, promptly embarked for Virgin Bay, and stepping fast on

the heels of the Costa Ricans, was met by a flag of truce from the enemy commander, who bespoke his humanity for the sick and wounded the invaders had been compelled to abandon in Rivas. Long afterward Ormerod read the reluctant tribute of Perez, the hostile Nicaraguan historian, to Walker's treatment of these men, who had bayoneted his own wounded on the steps of the altar in Rivas Cathedral: "In regard for the truth, we must say that Walker treated with humanity the soldiers that were commended to him."

But Ormerod had no share in the pursuit of the crumbling Costa Rican army. He was recuperating from his wound in Granada, doing garrison duty, and knew only from the message which came to headquarters of the utter disaster disease and battle wrought with the invaders. Of four thousand who had crossed the frontier scarcely five hundred returned, and they carried with them the germs of the *colerin* which smote down ten thousand of the civil population, and for the time being effectively removed Costa Rica from the list of Walker's enemies. A fortunate circumstance for him, for though destiny—manifest or otherwise—seemed to have swung decisively in his favor, under-currents had been set in motion which boded ill for the future.

Walker was still engaged in clearing the Transit of the enemy when the first tidings of disaffection at Leon reached Ormerod, at Granada, in a dispatch from de Avila:

I address you, *mi Coronel*, as representative of your general. Tell him there is trouble breeding here. The Englishman, Webster, has arrived from Honduras, men say as an agent of Vanderbilt. Whether this be true I do not know, but when I gave orders for his arrest as a suspicious character, Don Patricio intervened in his behalf, and the man, himself, produced credentials from the British Consul-general at Tegucigalpa, authorizing him to examine the situation in Nicaragua for the British Foreign Office. In the circumstances I can do nothing, since I am sure General Walker would not wish to flout the British openly.

Ormerod acknowledged the dispatch and forwarded it to Walker. Within the week came a second warning, this time from the señorita:

It is thought best that my father should not seem to write too frequently to Granada, for all is suspicion in Leon. Webster, the Englishman, has cashed a large draft from New York with an English merchant here. He is closeted daily with Don Patricio, and others of the President's circle, both Democrats and Legitimists, but chiefly the former. Warn General Walker that we learn Don Patricio has dispatched letters to the Costa Ricans, asking them to treat.

I send this by an *Indio* of our household.

This intelligence brought Walker hurrying back to Granada. And the day of his arrival produced a third, and more definite, warning from de Avila, himself:

Here in Leon the nettle of jealousy grows apace. Don Patricio and his friends are concerned for the popularity General Walker enjoys because of his success against the Costa Ricans. There is a growing demand for an election to set up a legal government, and they fear that if such an election was held now General Walker would be elected President. Don Patricio is become a good Democrat, and the Democrats tell him he is the hope of their party, as General Walker is recognized as the representative of the Legitimists of the South, whom he has rescued from invasion.

What will come of this situation no man can predict, but it is certain that Guatemala and San Salvador will march upon us as soon as they can, and we can not hope to have a fair election with invading troops in our midst. If there is to be an election at all it should be held now while the country is at peace. Moreover Webster is going about, telling every one who will listen to him that Vanderbilt will shortly crush the Transit Company, that he will contribute millions to any government hostile to General Walker, and that the British Government intends to intervene."

At the foot of the sheet of paper, in the señorita's resolute, angular writing, was the one line:

A nettle should be plucked before it is full-grown.

"The lady has a gift for sententious observation," commented Walker, tossing the dispatch across his desk to Ormerod. "File that with my private papers, please, Colonel. And tell Colonel von Ritterstein I am taking his battalion with me to Leon. We will march tomorrow. You go with me, of course."

VII

TO THE amazement of the Americans, Leon received Walker with an exuberance equal to Granada's. The common people hailed him as a hero and a savior; the clergy gave thanks for his deeds and offered prayers for his continued success; crowds poured out to meet him, singing pæans of praise especially composed for the occasion; maidens strewed flowers before his horse's hoofs, and hung posies on

the necks of his escort of Rifles and rangers; a delegation of women waited upon him at de Avila's house, the Casa Canedo, to thank him in the name of the wives and mothers of the Democratic North for having preserved them from the Costa Rican *hermaniticos*.

If there was a trace of uneasiness, a certain obliquity of eye, in the manner of Don Patricio and others of the government, they were at pains to veil it beneath the florid courtesy of their race. No honor was too great for Walker. The president and all the officers of state received him in the Plaza, and escorted him to his quarters. A solemn banquet was spread for him, at which his deeds were celebrated in sonorous Castilian, and toasts drunk to his victories, past and prospective. He was called the "hope of Nicaragua," "the steel shield of our national safety," reminded that while he had banished the menace of invasion from the South there were other enemies mobilizing to the northward, beseeched to leave a garrison of his Americans to hold Leon.

Ormerod, keenly alert for evidence of disaffection, observed only two discordant notes that first day of triumph. Canedo, commanding the native troops of the garrison, paraded for Walker's inspection, cast a cynical eye over the stalwart ranks of the Rifles and remarked—

"Ha, his imperial majesty has brought the Prætorians with him!"

"Your people seem glad enough to have them," retorted Ormerod, out of patience with the man's perpetual sourness.

"We Latins act like children over any spectacle," sneered Canedo.

"You won't talk that way when the Guatemalans and San Salvadoreans are marching across the border," snapped Ormerod.

"That depends upon whether they come as enemies or allies," flashed Canedo. And added hastily, "There is such a weapon as diplomacy, you know."

"Perhaps you have tried it," returned Ormerod, and rode off after his chief, more perturbed than he liked to admit.

Outside the Casa Canedo, a structure similar to the Casa de Avila in Granada, which had come to Don Jaime with his wife, he spied the drooping red moustache and long, horsey face of Webster; the Englishman was more nattily dressed than he had been when he was expelled from Granada; his cheeks were fuller, his figure more pompous, if possible, and he made no effort to conceal the derision with which he regarded the ceremony of Walker's reception. Meeting Ormerod's eye, he winked knowingly, and brandished his cane down the street toward the chipped terrace wall of the Cathedral of St. Peter. Ormerod was sufficiently familiar by now with Nicaraguan cities to recognize the usual place of execution, and his jaw muscles tightened instinctively with rage; he reined in his horse and started to turn out of the column, intent on giving the spy a piece of his mind. But Webster evidently feared physical retaliation, and discreetly sifted through the crowd into the mouth of an alley.

"You wait, me lad!" he called hoarsely as he disappeared.

De Avila was jubilant after the conclusion of the festivities, owning himself surprized by the feeling demonstrated for Walker. The filibuster, too, was inclined to regard the situation complacently. But Ormerod and the señorita, who joined them in counsel later in the evening, were united in deprecating overconfidence.

"I know the people in the street were in earnest," said Ormerod. "But the president was very nervous; he didn't have his heart in things at all."

" 'E 'as zhe politician' deestaste for see' anozher man supplant heem in 'is followers' favor," asserted de Avila. "Zhat ees natural. But what more could 'e 'ave say?"

"To be sure," agreed Walker. "We may readily discount a slight tendency to jealousy in the circumstances."

The señorita, dressed plainly in black, moved restlessly in her seat.

"You can never afford to discount jealousy," she objected. "How can we trust Don Patricio, knowing he has been hand-in-glove with Mr. Vanderbilt's agent and attempted to make peace with the Costa Ricans behind your back?"

"I saw Webster this morning," exclaimed Ormerod, and narrated the incident in the street.

Walker brushed it aside.

"I grant all that you say, sir, and still I fail to see what we have to fear from the man—a drunken wastrel, whose greatest coup has been an attempt to assassinate our friends here."

"It's not him, but his principal we must reckon with," answered Ormerod. "The Commodore—"

"You are disposed to exaggerate Mr. Vanderbilt's capacity for troubling us, Colonel," Walker interrupted coldly.

"An' for zhe plan of Don Patricio for treat' wiz zhe Costa Ricans," said de Avila, "eet was mos' unfortunate; but I 'ave discuss' it wiz heem, an' I believe, as 'e say, 'e theenk zhe time rripe to rrid zhe country of zhem peaceful'. 'E protest 'e would 'ave take' us into 'is confidence if zhe plan evair come to a 'ead."

"The time for him to have taken us into his confidence was when his plan was shaping," the señorita protested stormily.

"Yes, yes," assented Ormerod, "and what of Canedo's attitude? Here is the military governor of Leon, jeering at General Walker and talking of making allies of the Guatemalans and—"

"Oh, zhat ees only Rafael's way," interposed de Avila. "Always 'e ees gloomy, discontent'. An' we all weesh to mak' allies of enemies. Eet ees much bettair. Did not 'e spik of diplomacy, eh? *Carramba!* 'E talk foolish, but zhat ees his way." The old statesman hesitated, and then continued, smiling, "What ees more, frrom a boy 'e lofe Maria 'ere, but she—"

She rose, with a gust of passion so strong that even Walker blinked.

"What has that to do with our discussion? Is it not enough that I have thrust love from my heart to make myself a sure instrument for your purposes?" Her lithe body trembled so that Ormerod started to go to her, but she waved him away. "Either treat me as one of yourselves or treat me as a woman altogether. No, no, let me be! I will say what I choose."

"But of course, my child," said her father soothingly. "What else? You are overtire', eh? You worry too much for us? We weell not talk any more of Rafael, who ees—"

"He is a man, with a man's instincts and hates and jealousies," she broke in. "You persist in considering him still a boy. And he is unstable as water, like—like—all of our people."

She glared at them so superbly that Ormerod thrilled with the majesty of her wrath.

"We might as well admit it," she went on. "That is the curse of Nicaragua, of all Central America. When we have a good cause, we sell it out. When we find a leader, we betray him. Rafael is no better and no worse than the rest of us. He is jealous, as Don Patricio is jealous. They are ready tools for any schemer who seeks to employ them. But you—you will go on, with your heads in the clouds, thinking as statesmen, in terms of the nineteenth century."

She laughed hysterically.

"In this land we linger in the days of the Borgias. We advance ourselves by intrigue and assassination; we fight with mercenaries; we trust no man, if we are wise, and the man who trusts us is a fool—yes, as much of a fool as Rafael, who thinks—But you will think me a fool. And perhaps I am. Who knows? But I am not a credulous fool, at least."

And she burst from the room, her head high, her eyes sparking angrily, to the very considerable relief, as well as embarrassment, of her father.

"Zhat ees a woman for you, my frien's," he said apologetically. "She 'ave no logic; she ees lawless, independent. If she like not a thought she jump it—presto! *Sí*, eef she can 'elp it she do not theenk, she *feel*. *Sí, sí!*"

"Yet there is much in what she said," remarked Walker. "It is true, Don Jaime, that we err if we incline to be guided by the standards of Washington or Paris."

Omerod caught him up eagerly.

"I'm glad you mentioned that, General. And don't forget that we all know by experience how uncannily she can feel things—to use Don Jaime's word. It's true she doesn't think as we do; she doesn't have to."

"But we can not accept the Señorita de Avila's feelings in despite of established facts, Colonel Ormerod," Walker answered humorously. "Whatever we may suspect, we *know*—you will permit me the emphasis?—that up to this present we have no real cause for complaint against the president and his government. They seem determined to speak us fair, and so long as that is so, we can do nothing else but meet them on an equal footing."

"*Sí, sí,*" cried de Avila.

"After all," added Walker, "there is no considerable difference of opinion betwixt Don Patricio's friends and us. We desire an immediate election; they do not.

We will talk over the reasons pro and con, and I am sure reason will prevail. So far as I am concerned, they wrong me in suspecting I have a personal motive in urging a definite settlement of the government. I am principally concerned in establishing the country's normal life, so that we can present a united front to all enemies. I am the more optimistic regarding Don Patricio's loyalty because he is a good politician, and the reception we had today will have its impression upon him."

Ormerod held his peace after that, and was glad he did so, for the events of the next few days all went to bear out Walker's optimism. The señorita, herself, was almost convinced. It seemed as if everything developed to perfect the advantage of the American faction. While his conferences with the president and the cabinet were in session news was received of the successful execution of Padre Vigil's mission; the good priest had been accepted as minister from the Rivas Government by Secretary Marcy and presented formally to President Pierce.

And this enormously heightened Walker's prestige, as did likewise the additional information of the arival at Granada of two hundred more recruits from the East by steamer.

Whatever opposition remained in the mind of fat, old Don Patas Arriba was humbled by two such achievements, tending to prove that Walker was beginning to enjoy the official and popular support of the United States.

A decree calling for an election on the fourth Sunday of the month, June, was drawn up and signed. Not a word was said as to who should be candidates. The *politicos* were most polite, most deferential. It was no time for factionalism, oh, no! The country's needs must be served. The public voice should be heard. *Si, si!* Eerything would be all right—*muy manso y commodo.* The brave General Walker would see to that.

And in the wine-shops beyond the barrier of San Felipe, where dwelt the *Indios*, men whispered old tales of a gray-eyed man who should come out of the North to deliver them from Spanish—that is, white—oppression; tales which spread like the ripples that circle from the stoneplunged in a pond, gathering body as they were handed on from *puebla* to *puebla.*

VIII

WALKER returned to Granada the day after the decree of election was signed, accompanied for several miles of his journey by a cavalcade including the president and the chief dignitaries of the Rivas Government. When they finally parted Don Patricio embraced him, and bade him good-by with tears and every evidence of affection, protesting his gratitude for the protection the Americans had afforded and his satisfaction with the settlement of their differences. At the president's special request, Walker left behind him the Rifles, in command of Ormerod, who replaced Canedo as military governor of the city.

This plan had met with Ormerod's strenuous opposition. He had no desire, in the prevailing condition of their relations, to be any nearer the señorita than he could help, and he foresaw the probability of trouble with Canedo. But it was impossible for him to voice the first objection, and the second Walker refused to admit, pointing to the docility with which Don Rafael had received the news of his relegation to command of the native troops in garrison, and adding that if the Nicaraguan resented Ormerod's preferment he would entertain the same resentment for any other American who supplanted him. Ormerod's most cogent reason for suspecting that Canedo would particularly resent his selection was linked too closely with his first objection to be stated. So he made the best of a bad bargain, and yielded gracefully to his general's arguments—which were really orders.

And indeed, his first day in his new post made him half ashamed of his fears. The señorita kept very much to herself; she did not appear for the midday meal at the Casa Canedo, which de Avila had insisted he should make his headquarters, and at dinner that evening she had little to say, and retired early. Don Jaime was too delighted with the collapse of his own misgivings to have interest in the present; his eyes were fixed upon rosy visions of a future dedicated to prosperity and orderly government.

"Zhe ballot-box, zhat ees zhe cure for all evils," he announced at dinner. His daughter regarded him with unconcealed scorn, and vaguely sensing her discordance, he inquired absently:

"You 'ave been out thees day, Maria. What do you do?"

"I have been riding," she answered shortly.

Something in her tone prompted Ormerod to ask—

"Did you ride with a purpose, señorita?"

"I rode in search of the well of treachery that is bubbling up in Leon," she replied, and the tensity of her mood surcharged the room's atmosphere as though the air was acrackle with electricity.

"'Ere ees no treachery," rebuked her father. "You talk like a leettle child, like a woman who does not theenk."

"I am a woman," she returned.

"Did you find any trace of treachery?" pressed Ormerod.

Her eyes crossed his in one lightning flash of communion.

"None," she admitted.

"None!" cried de Avila. "But of course! We 'ave pass from zhe muddy waters of rrrevolution. Now we drrink from zhe spring of democracy. We grow strong. We become pure."

She did not answer him, but there came a weariness, a hopelessness of utter despair, in her face that lapped Ormerod with sorrow, although he told himself her suspicions were unjustified.

Of Webster he had seen nothing; the Englishman had stayed under cover since Walker's arrival. Don Patricio was warmly friendly, had invited him to dine the next day. Canedo had been scrupulously observant of military routine, turned in a report of the strength of the native garrison and the disposition of its units, called on him in the evening to arrange for the password of the night, was entirely courteous, if impersonal. The officers of the Rifles all agreed on the civility of the people, and their kindly manner toward the Americans. No, it was foolish to talk of treachery—dangerous to allow himself to listen to it. If the Leonese played fair they deserved consideration. And so Ormerod enjoyed his soundest night's sleep in a week.

In the morning, after breakfast, Canedo waited upon him again for the orders of the day; and as the Nicaraguan was leaving, he turned in the door, and said:

"Oh, by the way, Colonel Ormerod, you know there is a large store of reserve arms and ammunition in the *Principal*. Wouldn't it be a good idea for you to station a detail of your men there?"

"Yes, we should have a guard there," Ormerod agreed. "Are your troops all on duty?"

"We have the patrols to man," Canedo replied casually.

"Ah, in that case I'll have Colonel von Ritterstein send a detail. Thank you for bringing it to my notice, Colonel."

"There are the cathedral towers, too," said Canedo. "They dominate the city, and you can see the whole Plain of Leon from them. A few riflemen in them would be very valuable, in case trouble started."

"Trouble?" questioned Ormerod.

The Nicaraguan shrugged his shoulders.

"I beg your pardon if I have trespassed in what I said. I—"

"You were very kind to speak of the matter, Don Rafael," exclaimed Ormerod. "Yes, I suppose it would do no harm to keep a detachment of riflemen in the towers. They can be on the watch for us—and it will give them something to do. I'll have von Ritterstein attend to that, also."

He sent the message to von Ritterstein, and forgot about it. Barely an hour had passed when the señorita burst into the office he shared with her father.

"It has come!" she panted. "The city is rising. Don Patricio and the ministers have left the Government House. Quick, Peter! You must get your soldiers under arms."

The two men stared at her blankly.

"Don't you hear?" she demanded furiously. "I tell you it is as if Momotombo there—" she pointed out the window toward the cone of the volcano which rose above the city—"was thundering forth its lava. The *Indios* are up in San Felipe. Rafael's men are mustered at the *Cuartel*. The citizens are barring their windows. People say there is a revolution."

De Avila shook his head gently.

"But thees ees impossible, Maria. All ees safe and comforrrtable. Don Patricio—"

"Don Patricio is on horseback, and every member of the government with him," she cut him off. "They are fleeing the city."

Ormerod sprang to his feet.

"I don't understand this at all, Don Jaime," he said doggedly, "but we must find some way to stop it. Perhaps there is a canard that the Guatemalans are crossing the frontier."

The señorita tossed up her hands in a gesture at once denunciatory and submissive.

"The Guatemalans! Zut! It is the Americans they fear. It is you they arm against, Peter. There is a stream of treachery, thick and deep and wide, flowing from barrier to barrier of the city. It bubbled up in the night, as I told you it would, and now it is past stopping. It will flow on and on—I can see it—to Masaya, to Granada, to Rivas! And all that it touches become slimy with hate. Ah, what use is there to struggle with our fate? We are cursed as a people. Yesterday they cheered General Walker to the skies. Today they betray him. Hopeless, hopeless, hopeless!"

De Avila continued to shake his head gently.

"It ees impossible. Zhey cry for zhe ballot-box, zhat ees all."

"I can hardly believe it," agreed Ormerod, buckling on sword and revolver. "Let us find the president. I'm sure he'll put a stop to such idiotic fancies."

The señorita smiled pityingly. Her father murmured:

"*Sí, sí!* Don Patricio ees a man of sense."

In the *zaguan* they encountered von Ritterstein, perspiring profusely.

"*Himmel*, Ormerod!" he exclaimed. "In der street der *Indios* t'row stones at us, *undt* before der *Principal* a mob raises much——. What is wrong?"

"The señorita says a revolution has started," replied Ormerod. "But it seems incredible. I'm looking for the president."

"Don Patas Arriba," growled the German. "*Ach*, whatefer is der trouble he is in it." They reached the sidewalk. "See, dere he rides, mit all der ministers."

Ormerod recognized the President's stout figure in the midst of the troop von Ritterstein indicated. They were turning out of the Plaza, riding toward the Casa Canedo.

"Will you speak to him, Don Jaime?" asked Ormerod, conscious of the inadequacy of his Spanish.

"But yes," assented de Avila. "I theenk 'e come' to see me."

But the presidential party swerved over to the other side of the street at sight of the little group in front of them, and Rivas returned a short answer to de Avila's greeting. They would have ridden past without another word, if Ormerod had not stepped directly in their path. Don Patricio's face paled, and several of his attendants fumbled at their holsters; but Ormerod remained unperturbed.

"What did the president say to you, Don Jaime?" he asked.

"'E say 'e leave zhe city for fear of 'is life," de Avila answered dumbly.

"But why?" persisted Ormerod. "You ask him, señorita."

She stepped to Ormerod's side, and addressed the horsemen, shrinking in their saddles, with an effect of contempt that brought crimson splotches to the cheeks of Rivas, as he stammered his reply.

"Don Patricio says that the Americans prepared a plot to seize the persons of himself and his ministers," translated the señorita.

"But how ridiculous!" Ormerod protested. "Why should he think so?"

Again she questioned, and again the president answered, his stubby fingers trembling as they clutched his horse's bridle, the members of his troop clicking sibilant comments under their breaths.

"He says that you have taken over the *Principal* and the cathedral," repeated the señorita. "It is apparent to all that you make ready to imprison him by these steps."

"But I took them at Canedo's suggestion," cried Ormerod.

One of the ministers behind Don Patricio shouted a mocking comment. The señorita sighed.

"That man said perhaps Canedo also suggested that General Walker should move the capital from Leon to Granada."

"But General Walker has never thought of such a thing," denied Ormerod.

A titter of laughter came from the president's party, as the señorita translated this.

"What is the use of saying more?" she remonstrated. "They know what they do. Let them do it, accursed be their names."

De Avila cried out fiercely. Stunned by the sudden overturning of his convictions, he had stood silent throughout the brief dialogue; but now he blazed into speech.

A tumultuous blast of Spanish, excoriating, vindictive, bitter with the gall of frustrated endeavor.

Little cries and snarls came from the horsemen, and the president at last burst in upon him with a single jeering question.

"Don Patricio says that you may convince him you mean no harm," explained the señorita to Ormerod. "Remove your men from the *Principal* and the towers of the cathedral."

"*Sí, sí*," de Avila endorsed, switching

from despair to hope in the flick of an eyelash. "Prove to them you mean no harm, Don Pedro. It ees a simple thing. Only a matter of an order—"

"You urge the Americans to sign their death-warrants, father," the señorita interrupted vigorously. "This affair has an ill look."

From afar, across the Plaza, came a mob's many-throated voice, shrill, swollen with ire:

"*Mueran a los Yanquis! Sangre, sangre!*"

Familiar sound, thought Ormerod, reminiscent of the barricades of Rivas and the frenzied charges of brown, monkey-faced Costa Ricans—who bayoneted wounded men.

"*Ach, nein,*" grunted von Ritterstein. "You wouldt not recommend dot policy if you hadt seen der spirit of der people, Don Jaime."

"It is unthinkable," said the señorita. "They mean only more treachery. Why should Rafael have suggested to Colonel Ormerod the very moves which Don Patricio fixes upon as excuses for his *émeute?*"

"I will refer the president's demand to General Walker," offered Ormerod. "Tell him that. Ask him to wait in Leon until I receive an answer."

But Don Patricio's beady eyes glinted balefully as he jerked a sarcastic reply.

"He says he has no doubt of General Walker's answer," translated the señorita. "He is not anxious to perish before the American rifles, so he—"

But the president concluded her sentence for her, spurring forward his horse, his escort clattering at his heels. As he passed de Avila he bent from the saddle, and hissed a single ejaculation, with a concentration of venom that convinced Ormerod of the irrevocableness of his defection. De Avila was beyond resentment.

"'E call me trrraitor to my rrace," he said heavily; "but what ees 'e, who jump' from side to side, who embrace a man one day, an' the nex' become 'is enemy? 'E was well name' Patas Arriba!"

Ormerod watched the black-coated troop of *politicos* as they trotted down the street. At a corner several squares from where he stood, a single horseman of Northern stature joined them, with mutual demonstrations of hilarity and congratulation. A red moustache showed against the background of dark Latin faces, a hand was waved to him in burlesqued farewell, a hoarse voice shouted over the rattling of hoofs:

"Ta-ta, Yankee! How'd you like *my* revolution?"

"That was Webster," exclaimed the señorita.

Ormerod nodded.

"And if he has been busy here, you may be sure Spencer has been up to mischief somewhere else. Well, we were right. If the general only had listened to us!"

"They would have gained their object in another way," she answered. "When the heart is rotten the fruit must decay."

De Avila shook his head gently.

"Zhey mus' learn zhe ballot-box."

From beyond the Plaza rose again the screeching of the mob:

"*Mueran a los Yanquis! Sangre, sangre!*"

Von Ritterstein coughed to attract Ormerod's attention.

"Vot do we do?" he inquired. "I do not like dis yelling."

"Nor do I," assented Ormerod. "Send off a courier at once to overtake General Walker, and report the situation to him. In the meantime, divide your men between the *Principal* and the cathedral, and detail one company to occupy Don Jaime's house. That's wise, isn't it, sir?" he appealed to de Avila.

"Since my people are my enemies, *sí*, Don Pedro," the old statesman agreed sadly. "But they mus' not be shooted, not for me, señors."

"No, that's what the trouble-makers want us to do," endorsed Ormerod. "Not a shot must be fired, if it can be prevented, von Ritterstein. Keep your men under cover. I am going to see Canedo, and learn where he stands."

"*Ja, wohl,*" returned the German, swinging into his saddle, his soldier's mind at rest the instant he had orders to go by.

"A black day," groaned de Avila as von Ritterstein galloped off.

The señorita took his arm, her face a mask of tragedy.

"Yes, father," she answered. "Let us go indoors. In Leon today we have only enemies among our people. The snake of treachery has poisoned their hearts against us."

"We mus' teach them zhe ballot-box," said Don Jaime bravely.

"The ballot-box! Their ballot-box is the cartridge-box."

The agony of her disillusionment shocked Ormerod.

"If I can do anything—" he proffered awkwardly.

"Nothing, Peter," she said with a calmness that ended abruptly in a sob, "except to leave us alone with our shame."

Side by side, father and daughter walked slowly under the arch of the *zaguan*, with its carven armorial shield, quarterings of Canedos, de Avilas, Alvarados, Gonzalvos, de la Huertas, Vasconcellos; the shadows of the dark entry received them in a pool of mystery; a door opened, and the sunshine bathed them momentarily in a nimbus of golden light; then they were gone.

"Oh, ——," muttered Ormerod, and became aware of the inscrutable gaze of the *Indio*, who held his horse at the curb, and who had been silent witness to all that had transpired since he and the de Avilas had rushed into the street. "I wonder what he thinks about it."

The *Indio* rose from his haunches, and silently offered the white man the horse's bridle; Ormerod tossed him a *quartillo*, and the brown face crinkled in immediate appreciation.

"*Dios se lo pague, señor,*" purred the gentle voice.

The recollection of that flashing smile, the liquid tones of the acknowledgement of his trifling gift, persisted in Ormerod's consciousness as he walked his horse up the street and across the Plaza to the *cuartel*, where Nicaraguan sentries stood, with fixed bayonets and eyes upon the riflemen in front of the *Principal* and on the terrace of the cathedral. He could not forget them even when Canedo advanced to meet him, features an olive mask.

"Good morning, Colonel Ormerod," the Nicaraguan greeted him. "Have you come to turn over your posts to me?"

"I have not," snapped Ormerod. "It is a commentary on your conception of honor, Canedo, that you, who invited me to occupy them, can allow yourself—"

"Oh, as the French say, all is fair in love and war," Canedo answered carelessly.

"So you admit your duplicity!"

"Duplicity?" Canedo shrugged the accusation aside. "A trick, Ormerod. That is all. An advantage exploited by the weaker side." His voice assumed an edge of derision: "You were very easily imposed upon, weren't you?"

"I was so foolish as to consider you a gentleman," rapped Ormerod. "I took it for granted you might be loyal to your country, if not to Don Jaime."

Canedo's eyes glittered with menace.

"The less you say of de Avila, the better. Bah! You have duped him, yes, and ensnared my cousin—you a heretic, a Yankee, an ill-bred stranger! But you can not fool me."

The man's self-control had reached the breaking-point, and Ormerod realized that if an open clash was to be averted he must not lose his own. He gathered up his bridle.

"We won't discuss personal matters, sir," he said. "I rode over to ask if you were an enemy. I find you are. It is my duty to inform you that I have communicated the situation to General Walker, and am awaiting orders from him before taking any action. If you keep the mob under control, as you can, and do not attempt to attack my men I undertake to maintain my present position. Otherwise I shall—"

"Oh, I am not afraid of you," snarled Canedo. "And our people are not afraid to die, if they must, to avoid Yankee tyranny. You are the stronger, and we know it; but we shall soon have friends to help us. Guatemala will send her soldiers to fight for us, and so will San Salvador and Costa Rica. The British will aid us, and if your corrupt government at Washington have sold themselves to you, still we shall have the alliance of Mr. Vanderbilt. This is only the beginning, Ormerod!"

Ormerod rode away without answering him. Only the beginning! It was very likely. The New Yorker wondered if Walker would be so sure, now, that he could discount the Commodore's vengeance.

IX

ORMEROD'S messenger overtook Walker at Masaya that night, and returned to Leon the next morning with the general's orders:

Masaya, 12th June, 1856.

To Col. Peter C. Ormerod,
Military Governor, Leon.

SIR:

1. This acknowledges receipt of your dispatch of even date, reporting the defection of President Rivas and subsequent developments at your post.

2. You will at once evacuate Leon with all your troops, carrying off with you any of the inhabitants who believe themselves in danger of ill-treatment at the hands of the revolutionists. You are to continue to use every endeavor to avoid bloodshed.

It is obvious that an attempt is being made to provoke you to open hostilities.

3. I shall march toward Leon in the morning, with the Rangers and the Second Light Infantry, prepared to support you, if you are pursued by the enemy. Advise me at frequent intervals of your position.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your ob't, h'le s'v't,

WILLIAM WALKER,

General Commanding-in-chief.

Whatever his motive, Canedo made no attempt to interfere with the evacuation. His Nicaraguans took over the *Principal* and the cathedral as soon as the Rifles were withdrawn, there was a little firing of muskets in the air, some cheering and yelping at the Americans, mostly on the part of the mob, and the bells of all the churches rang out peals of victory as the little column tramped into the road that led south by Lake Managua. But to Ormerod's relief he was suffered to leave the city unhindered, with a train of refugees, including several families, beside the de Avila household, who had reason to fear the animosity of the Rivas faction. Other Nicaraguans who joined them on the road brought news that Rivas was barricading himself in Chinandega, a few miles North, and had issued a proclamation denouncing Walker as an enemy to the republic and cancelling his own decree for an election. A commissioner also had been sent to invite the Guatemalans to come to the aid of the Leonese.

Don Jaime's frail body seemed to grow frailer under the bludgeoning of these tidings; and he huddled forlornly in his saddle. But the señorita held herself very erect, never speaking unless spoken to. The rainy season had begun, and in the afternoon the gray sky drenched them with a downpour that fell in straight, watery lance-shafts, whipping the thick dust of the road into a layer of mud a foot deep, in which the horses floundered and tired riflemen slipped and stumbled.

At dusk they encountered Walker's outposts on the edge of Nagarote, and dragged themselves thankfully to the billets he provided. Ormerod had become infected by the depression of the Nicaraguans in the tedious march through a countryside dripping with moisture, so the calm cheerfulness of his general reacted upon him as refreshingly as the stiff drinks of *'ardiente* which were handed around. Quiet, alert, sympathetic with their recent hardships, Walker even succeeded in rousing de Avila to a more hopeful consideration of their situation. And though the señorita continued aloof, the anguish faded gradually from her face, and presently she was interpolating pithy comments on their discussion.

"I see no reason to be cast down," Walker declared. "What we required was a general clarifying of the situation. Don Patricio has given us just that. Thanks to his action, we shall discover definitely who are our friends and who are our enemies. We can likewise be grateful that he has quit us now, rather than in the midst of a conflict with an invading army."

The gray eyes gleamed coldly.

"He has simply played into our hands. Had he bided his time, and awaited the result of the election, I consider it quite likely he would have been reelected to the presidency. As it is, I am justified in permitting my friends to present my candidacy."

"An American president!" thrust the señorita.

"I am a naturalized citizen of Nicaragua, señorita," parried Walker. "And I will add that I am not seeking election."

"No, you would reject it," she gibed.

"On the contrary," returned Walker evenly, "I shall welcome it, if the people really desire me, because I am confident that I am the one person who can pacify the country and reorganize it on a progessive basis."

"Ah, I understand Rafael's madness," she cried.

Don Jaime bestirred himself, his wan features coloring faintly in the heat of the fire around which they sat in the main room of a poor *fonda*.

"Thees ees not good talk, Maria," he chided. "Who else but our general can achieve thees task?"

"You," she flashed.

"I?" He shook his head in the gentle, puzzled fashion that had become a habit with him. "I am too ol', my child. Once—Ah, yes! But today—no."

Walker intervened.

"My purpose is to avail myself of the authority I derive from our original treaty with Corral. Under that I am charged with preserving the integrity of the republic. Rivas has placed himself outside the law,

having summoned foreign enemies to cross the frontiers. He has subjected himself to removal from the presidency, and if Don Jaime is willing to assume the responsibility, I shall issue a decree naming him provisional president to hold office until the election."

Don Jaime was mildly enthusiastic.

"*Sí, sí,*" he murmured. "We 'ave a victory of zhe ballot-box."

"A victory of the American riflemen," asserted his daughter scornfully. "When was there a victory of the ballot-box in Nicaragua?"

"There must be a first time in all things," answered Walker. "But let us suppose that this election is dictated by compulsion. From which of us two has the country most to hope for, Rivas or myself?"

"Nicaragua has nothing to hope for from her sons," she admitted sternly.

"She has much to hope for from them," returned Walker; "but they require teaching in the arts of government. I thought we were agreed upon that score before we came here."

"But yes," de Avila echoed bewilderedly. "Why else, *mi alma*, did we invite the Americans to put down the Legitimists?"

"God knows!" she said. "We thought we did for the best, but we should not be the first who wrought injustice with purity of intention."

"How do we wreak injustice?" Walker asked patiently. "Can we make Nicaragua more unhappy than we found her? You know it is impossible! We take the best elements of two races, and blend them to produce a superior culture. What could be more effective? We work for order, security, comfort. Those who oppose us strive for perpetual revolution, because, under the cloak of revolution, they can feather their own nests. Their one answer to opposition is the fusillade."

The señorita bowed her head.

"You speak with logic," she said. "I can not combat you with logic. Reason, too, is on your side. Perhaps justice—I do not know. But deep in my heart throbs the spirit of my people; it is crude and untutored and savage and blind, and it seeks to take its own path, however mistaken that path may be. I—I am cursed with the viewpoints of two races; I see how ridiculous, how just, this is. And my soul is wrung for my people, who are at fault, and who ask only to be left at fault—which it is impossible that they should be!"

Walker nodded kindly.

"I understand your state of mind, señorita. You are naturally disheartened by your experiences, but I am sure you perceive how excellent it is for all concerned that the mists of deceit have been dissipated. We know where we are, and knowing, we can front the future without dread. For myself, I protest I am so vain as to believe I am called to fulfill a certain destiny here."

She looked up quickly, and to Ormerod it seemed as though her eyes looked through, not at, him.

"Yes, you have a destiny here, General," she agreed, "and so have I."

"Then we are at one," returned Walker courteously. "Without you and Don Jaime, indeed, I should scarcely have advanced to this point in our course."

"Commodore Vanderbilt thinks he has a destiny to fulfill here, too," Ormerod remarked dryly.

"Mr. Vanderbilt will find it a very different sort of thing to interfere in Nicaraguan affairs after I am elected president," rejoined Walker, undisturbed. "A legally constituted government is not lightly to be tampered with."

The señorita's cheeks glowed scarlet. She opened her mouth as if to speak, then shut it again.

But Don Jaime smiled.

He looked from Walker to Ormerod and back again to the General as a child might at his parents.

"A goverrrnment of zhe ballot-box, zhat ees sacrred," murmured de Avila.

"It is for us to make it so," endorsed Walker. "And to reach that happy end we must be prepared to deal starkly with realities. We must defeat foreign enemies, punish traitors and put the people to work."

His freckled face set in hard, implacable lines.

"No people can succeed who will not work. If necessary, we must *make* them work."

"Make the *Indios* work!" jeered the señorita.

"If necessary," he repeated as calmly as ever. "Shall we sleep, my friends? I have a chamber reserved for you, señorita."

BOOK V

I

THE mills of the gods that ordinarily grind slowly, but exceeding fine, pounded at a dizzy rate of cosmic speed that summer of 1856, and the coarse meal of destiny poured in a steady stream from between the burring stones; the upper of opportunity bearing hard and ever harder upon the nether of necessity.

In the United States the Republican party was being born, and the country was convulsed by a political campaign waged on sectional lines; the Democrats, themselves torn by the immense spiritual impulses the slavery controversy had unleashed, rejected Pierce for renomination and named instead Buchanan of Pennsylvania, a crafty, time-serving, political gentleman, apt at straddling dangerous questions, notoriously safe —and therefore a tempting candidate to wavering Northern Democrats and those more conservative Whigs, who looked upon Republicanism as a weird demonstration of Western radicalism, but withal an apostle of manifest destiny.

In Central America the capitals of the four Servile or Legitimist states resounded with the rolling phrases of *pronunciamientos* and echoed to the tramp of marching battalions.

To Ormerod, working at high pressure in Granada as Walker's chief of staff, that summer was afterward a nightmare series of vivid pictures glimpsed hastily through the monotonous curtain of the rain; pictures painted in harsh colors against a leaden background of commonplace events. There was, for instance, Don Jaime's proclamation as provisional president, the old statesman looking very small and frail in the *zaguan* of the Government House, the señorita straight and somber at his elbow, as he announced with revived pride that he should hold office "until the ballot-box decides." The de Avilas had borne themselves throughout with a dignity which voiced their conviction of rectitude, and went far to establish Walker's cause in the eyes of the more advanced of their countrymen.

The election furnished a touch of comic relief in a period mainly devoted to melodrama. The first attempt in Nicaragua to choose a chief executive by direct ballot, and with practically half the country under control of enemies, who refused to permit it to be held at all, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. The party in power, which conducted it, won by practically any figure the inspectors cared to maintain. Ormerod, like other thinking Americans, was divided between indignation and mirth, indignation at the abuse of an instrument he had been reared to consider a freeman's chief heritage, and mirth at the grave way in which the *pueblas* reported a distribution of the vote which the *jefes* decided would both secure Walker's triumph and give indication that the opposing interests had been allowed an opportunity to express themselves.

Don Jaime received it with enthusiasm.

"Now we 'ave teach zhem zhe ballot-box," he boasted, reiterating pitifully the one idea to which he clung as justifying his separation from his countrymen.

But the señorita's keen intellect cut through the sham.

"We have done what it was necessary we should do," she said. "And in the manner our interests required. Let us accept our accomplishments in that light and not deceive ourselves. We are strong today, not in proportion to the votes the *politicos* returned for you, General, but to the number of rifles you can muster against our enemies."

Walker inclined his head slightly.

"I have no quarrel with your estimate of the situation, señorita. Let us put the election aside as an accomplished fact. We wanted it. Very well, we have it. It is a fairer election than any other ever held—you will admit that?"

"Yes, yes," she assented impatiently, "but it means no more than that your retainers—and ours—saw to it that the vote was cast to secure what you desired."

"Granted," he answered, "Hypocrisy is as abhorrent to me as to you—but we will hope to improve matters in the future."

His eyes met hers with the chill impact he could direct against a hostile will.

"To improve matters," he went on, "or, perhaps, to amend them. A people should have freedom and liberty of choice of their rulers only to the extent they are deserving of such rights."

"We mus' raise up zhe people," said de Avila. "We mus' teach zhem to be virtuous."

"In so far as we can," amended Walker. "It would be hypocrisy, again, to pretend

that all peoples are suited to one system of government. But we shall see. I have learned much in the past year."

"But you have not learned tolerance," countered the señorita.

"I do not choose to tolerate incapacity," rejoined Walker; "and that is the curse of this country—incapacity to work, to fight, to govern, three capacities without which no people can be virtuous, in the sense Don Jaime uses the word."

The señorita's face set coldly.

"You remind me that we have no time for discord," she said, picking up a paper from the table in front of her. "This is a report that Spencer is in San José. He has been seen with Mora and other Costa Ricans."

"Probably he will supply them with muskets to replace those they left behind them in Rivas," answered Walker unemotionally. "I can not take these desperadoes seriously. Webster, after deluding Rivas into a thoughtless revolt, has been able to do nothing more harmful than hang about Leon and talk of what Mr. Vanderbilt will do to us. Two men of their character opposed to us are a guarantee of our fitness. At the most, they can only stimulate the hatred which already prevails."

"Is it wise, sir, to risk underestimating any opponent?" objected Ormerod.

"I do not underestimate them," returned the filibuster. "But I decline to believe that the Government of the United States will permit a disgruntled rich man to make private war upon the chief of a friendly state. You must not forget that the outstanding result of the election is to regularize my position."

A statement the truth of which was presently to become patent to all observers. He was a product of the ballot-box—and how should they assay the humorous aspects of balloting among an illiterate and partially hostile population?

Another gaudy picture, that inauguration, flung upon the gray curtain of the rain, with solemn pomp of parades, religious services, receptions to the *politicos*, the consuls and the foreign colony, and set speeches by de Avila and Walker, and finally, to the chiming of church-bells and booming of cannon, the administration of the oath of office to Walker on bended knees. And five days afterward Minister Wheeler, that Carolinian popinjay who occupied the American Legation, received instructions from Secretary of State Marcy to recognize "the existing government in Nicaragua," Mr. Marcy having intended by this the Rivas Government which has accredited Padre Vigil to Washington. But Minister Wheeler, a devout adherent to the gospel of manifest destiny, chose to interpret him literally, loath to let slip so brave an opportunity to assist the new régime.

What a to-do there was at Washington when the minister's naive report of his achievement reached the State Department! Of course, they found a way out. Minister Wheeler was disowned and recalled and relations with Walker were broken off; but all this poltroonery gained was the political whitewashing of the great Democratic party in those Northern circles it was anxious not to offend. The Democratic voters, North and South, and a great number of the dwindling army of Whigs were still individual supporters of Walker. They cheered him at mass-meetings, raised money and collected arms for him and started again to enlist recruits in his behalf.

And in New York, Commodore Vanderbilt sat himself down at his desk and, with laborious effort and a deal of sulphuric cursing, wrote a letter to Ormerod:

DEAR PETE:

I may be a fool, but I ain't a —— fool and its agin my principuls to keep throwin good fuel under a overheeted biler So what I say is lets Walker and me be resonabel. Tell him I wil pay $100,000 the day my fust steamer sails from New York and $150,000 more in the fust year and no questions askd.

If I got to fite I will fite but I figgered this wood cost less money. Yrs sincerely,

CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.

Ormerod's first inclination was to rush direct to Walker with this peace offer; his second was to tear up the letter and forget about it; his definite conclusion was to present the Commodore's terms in an entirely detached and impartial fashion. In the end he had cause to congratulate himself that he acted with reserve, for Walker listened to his statement with menacing frigidity.

"Do I understand that you received this offer direct from Mr. Vanderbilt, sir?" demanded the filibuster.

"Yes, General."

"Did it occur to you, Colonel Ormerod, that I have made an agreement, in all honor and faithful intent, with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Garrison for the privileges Mr. Vanderbilt is bidding for?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"A little reflection, Colonel," Walker interrupted sharply, "will inform you that I should place myself in the position of selling out my friends and supporters, accepting a bribe and suborning my official position, if I even consider this odious proposition. Let me hear no more of it, please."

"But perhaps Mr. Morgan and Mr. Garrison would be willing to make some compromise with the Commodore," pleaded Ormerod. "If you can get rid of his hostility, you can—"

"His hostility is of no interest to me," said Walker. "I shall be obliged if you will drop the subject, sir."

So Ormerod retired, with a certain unwilling admiration for his chief's rigor of purpose. His answer to the Commodore was as diplomatically phrased as a legal mind could make it, but it drew such language from the recipient that Mr. Lambert Wardell, in the outer office, at 5 Bowling Green, looked very thoughtful and tiptoed over to close the door into the hall.

"I suppose I shall be out buying Central American bills of exchange this afternoon," reflected Mr. Wardell.

II

WHILE the rainy season barred hostilities the two factions organized their forces and jockeyed for the advantage of position. In Leon gathered a motley array of allies, who soon fell to squabbling over questions of leadership and national interests and became a prey to disease. They stayed behind the city's barricades, and shivered if a patrol of Jenkins' Rangers appeared in the Managua road. In Granada, Walker was occupied with gigantic plans for the reconstitution of Nicaragua. Incidentally, he saw to it that the discipline of his troops was improved and aided the surgeons in checking the constant danger of cholera and fever. But even he was helpless to quell the ravages of idleness among such reckless spirits as he commanded. For want of other enemies to fight they dueled with each other, and the constant drunkenness and debauchery all but neutralized the vigilance and skill of Moses' staff.

Most men, it seemed to Ormerod, must have been discouraged by the thoughtlessness of subordinates who piled up petty troubles for their commander at a time when he required all his energy to cope with national problems. But as his difficulties increased Walker grew in moral stature, and the roughest frontiersmen in the filibuster army yielded him whole-hearted respect on every occasion. Oddly enough, they developed a blind, unquestioning affection for him, an affection incomprehensible to Ormerod in view of his icy disposition and undemonstrative manner. "Uncle Billy," they called him, and none too ready to show respect for many of their officers, they snapped to attention whenever he appeared, cheered him on the slightest excuse and boasted in their cups of how he should lead them on to fresh conquests when "Nicaraguey" was once pacified.

Less estimable than this quality of inspiring affection was Walker's increasing tendency to withdraw into himself. From week to week, from month to month, he tightened his grip on the powers of administration, until Don Jaime and the other ministers of the cabinet were reduced to the status of clerks to execute his mandates. In the early days of his Presidency he had continued his practise of holding informal councils with the de Avilas and Ormerod, but longer and longer intervals of time lapsed between their meetings, and their discussions became colorless arguments concerning non-essentials. Important matters Walker either dismissed or listened to in silence. He was entirely courteous, considerate, too, seldom delivered a flat negative, unless the señorita compelled him to, for she—and she only in Granada—dared to flaunt his authority; but he was adamant when his mind was made up, as it usually was when he came into conference.

Nobody blamed him for his self-assuredness. His success had been uncanny, and already a legend had grown up around his name, based upon that ancient tradition the *Indios* murmured in the *posadas*. He was invincible, a veritable *conquistador*. He was to subdue all Central America. Then the canal men had talked about for so many years would be built; the French emperor would supply him ships; and Cuba would be wrested from Spain. After that, of course, Mexico would fall to his arms, and a great military state would be erected, stretching from the Rio Grande to the borders of New Granada, a state governed by a ruling cast of North Americans, wherein—a clever catchword, this, for the sorely badgered South—

African slavery was to be reestablished.

Ormerod traced with interest the conception of this latter idea in the filibuster's mind. It sprang, he was convinced, from Walker's realization of the ingrown laziness of the *Indios* and half-breeds who composed the laboring population, and the ill effects of the climate upon the rank and file of the Americans. After his inauguration, with the approval of de Avila and his other Nicaraguan supporters, Walker had planned a decree penalizing vagrancy, authorizing imprisonment of laborers who remained idle two weeks at a time and providing for enforcement of contracts between laborers and employers. But this decree was practically ineffectual; a larger rural police than Jenkins' Rangers would have been required to carry out its terms; and the *Indios* went on their indolent way, clearing and planting little patches big enough to yield them their year's food and no more. The vast indigo, sugar and coffee plantations, which had been a mine of wealth in Colonial days, continued the prey of the jungle; the half-ruined cities drowsed on in shabby magnificence.

Then, in mid-summer, had come to Granada the Hon. Pierre Soulé, some time senator from Louisiana and minister to Madrid—another signer of the Ostend Manifesto and apostle of manifest destiny, native of France, but more Southern in his politics than Jefferson Davis—as emissary from the extreme wing of Southern Democrats, who, foreseeing their inevitable defeat in the campaign to carve slave States, with free, out of the new Western territories, had turned eagerly to Walker's enterprise as offering an opportunity to rear a powerful slave republic in Central America which should be an ally of the South at need and assist in the restoration of the slave trade with Africa, prohibition of which was a constant source of irritation in the rice and cotton states, where the high death-rate in the work-gangs offset the natural increase and importations from Virginia, the center of the domestic slave-breeding industry.

A leonine person, Senator Soulé, addicted to broadcloth and fine linen, with the voice of an orator, sonorous, profound, however trivial the thoughts he enunciated. And the consequence of Soulé's arguments, trivial and profound, was the Decree of September 22nd, preparing the way for the reestablishment of slavery in Nicaragua.

The Central American governments were furious over the Decree of September 22nd. In the United States, Horace Greeley, the Abolitionists and the Republican spellbinders ripped it to shreds and branded Walker as a tool of the Slavocracy—but then, as Walker said, they had been doing this ever since he embarked upon his venture. But in the South he became a popular hero, and the enlistment of recruits for him was accelerated beyond its former scope. It was generally taken for granted that the new administration would recognize him, for the South, aggressively belligerent, expected to own the new administration—being ignorant of its standard-bearer's fondness for straddling thorny questions.

III

IN AUGUST Ormerod received a letter from Norah Connolly:

DEAR MR. PETER:

I take my pen in hand hoping you are well as this leaves me. A lad from Duane Street is home from Nicaragua and says Mike Gilligan is a captain and yourself was wounded and is well again Glory be to God and dont be rash Mr. Peter. Mrs. Moriarty her thats mother to him came home says there do be lashins of fever and sickness with you be sure and keep yr underware dry and mind the drink but you was always a moderate young man. Mr. Law him thats forever cursing the Pope may the Devil fly off with him was here with a grand gentleman with a beard like Moses himself and they was after asking was you whole and still in furrin parts. Why do you ask says I and the tall gentleman says becaze Im for jining up with him if he is. So I said for all I knew you was in this place they call Granada and they went off contented. But mind you theres no good into anything Mr. Law is into what with his making a mock of the Holy Father and the blessed saints God forgive him. And a day gone by I was coming up Nassau St from the market and who was there in the middle of the road but Mr. Greeley him that rites the paper. You wont remember me sir says I and he sqwints out of his glasses and says If I shld maam Im sorry. Im Norah Connolly says I that keeps house for Mr. Peter Ormerod and if you dont remember me you will the punkin pies youve ate with us in the Judges time. I remember the both of you says he and all I wish is you had the young man and a pie with you this minit for its in a better place hed be than he is now. Oh he does well enuff says I isnt he a Colonel and him mighty young. Mr. Greeley snorted like and his glasses wigled on his nose and says he Colonel of a band of fileybusters destructors of the Union no less. And with that I lost my temper Holy Mother speke up for me and says I Ah you talk like a Republican. Well with that a man spoke behind me a high thin voice the like of a little shaver and I spun round to give him a peace of my mind but he was that tall he tuk the

breath out of my throat. And his face all cut with wrinkles and a big wart sticking out on his chin and a look like he wanted for good cooking but there was a light in his eye made me forget the ugliness of him. You found out Greeley says he. And Mr. Greeley laffed. Its by a frend then says he. This is Norah Connolly that keeps house for Peter Ormerod you met on the ferry and are always asking for. Keeps house do you say says I. Thats true but I raised him to.

The tall man with the wart bowed to me like I was a great lady. Now I understand why I liked Mr. Ormerod says he. Ah then dont be letting Mr. Greeley blaygard him becaze they dont think alike says I. Mr. Greeley laffed again and says he Norah if I say anything against Mr. Ormerod its because I like him and wld rather have him with me than against me. Hes in the wrong camp and thats Gods truth. I was mad again and says I I've known him from his mothers womb and theres no badness in him nor wickedness neither beyond the porshun of men. The tall man smiled at the two of us so I was shamed of my anger. Its not wicked to be mistaken says he or not one of us wld be able to claim goodness. If you rite Mr. Ormerod tell him Abe Lincoln askd for him and hopes the day will come hell agree with me but if he dont Ill respect him the same. Theres got to be two sides to every question Norah and so somebodys got to be on the other side havent they. And with that I turned on Mr. Greeley and says I Theres wisdom for you that writes newspapers and cant reason justly. Mr. Greeley got a little red and wigled his glasses and Mr. Lincoln the tall man says Dont be hard on him Hes only looking out for his side of the question.

Well says I its a good thing theres men like you sir to sit between the two sides and keep them from the fiting. He shook his head and says he very sad Im just a country lawyer Norah It takes a very great man to keep a people from fiting. And Mr. Peter will you believe me I felt the power on me that minit like I could see what was beyond and says I But its a great man you are and God be my witness that says it. Well with that the two of them smiled and Mr. Greeley says Hes to modest Norah I wldnt wonder if he was a Senator someday or maybe Governor of Illinois where he lives. God love him and lift him to his right place then says I. He took my hand the tall man did and says he If God makes me worthy of the trust of people like you Ill ask no more Norah. Dear me says Mr. Greeley this is getting very afecting Lincoln, shall I go on. And says I more pert than I shld If youd patern by Mr. Lincoln Id worry for all the Republicans youd make Mr. Greeley sir. So they both laffed and went off. Well Mr. Peter Ive been too days over this leter and rerote it once and I hope its what it shld be. Everythings as usual and the money comes in regular from Mr. van Ruysdyck. Yrs rspfly

NORAH CONNOLLY

P. S. I told Miss Lydia when she was in the city on her way home from Boston about yr. being wounded and she got very white. The Englishman that was sparking her is gone but they say she and her father will be going abroad next year I thort youd want to know.

Ormerod's eyes moistened as he scrutinized the painfully legible scrawl, with its occasional blots and evidence of tedious concentration. Dear old Norah! He chuckled over her set-to with Greeley and felt an unaccountable satisfaction in the discovery that Lincoln had remembered him. A strange man! He chuckled again as he realized that Greeley had promoted the Westerner another peg in prospect—he might now be governor. The "grand gentleman with a beard like Moses himself," he decided, must have been Henningsen. That was good news, if it foreshadowed the early arrival of the soldier of fortune. As to the postscript, Ormerod read it hurriedly, and never referred to it again. It made him uncomfortable. He was sure Lydia would write him, and he hated the thought of answering her letter.

Sure enough, the next mail from the North brought him two letters, one from Lydia and one from Henningsen, both short, but very different in tone.

Lydia wrote:

The Manor
Van Ruysdyck's Dorp
New York
August 25th 1856.

DEAR PETER:

Norah Connolly told me the other day in New York that you had been wounded, but had recovered completely. I do hope so. Really, you should let us know when anything like this happens. Father was much concerned about it. Just because you have gone a different way from ours is no reason why you should treat us as strangers. We are still fond of you, if I may say so, no matter how much we deplore the mistake you have made.

Write and tell us how you are, and please, please be careful. Mr. Law told father that Colonel Henningsen was to join General Walker; he—Mr. Law—is very optimistic about your expedition. But most people seem to think it is a flash in the pan, especially if the Commodore continues to fight it. I hear from London, a letter from Mr. Salmon—do you remember him?—that the English Caribbean Squadron is to be ordered to Greytown.

The world seems all confused. People pouring in here from Ireland and Germany on every packet. Thousands and thousands streaming West to make room for the immigrants in the cities. Fighting with the Indians. Fighting in Kansas. Such a bitter political campaign. Talk of a separation of the North from the South. And your war in Nicaragua. I often wonder what will come of it all.

With regards from father,

Your old friend,
LYDIA.

Henningsen's was straight and to the point:

La Farge House, New York City,
August 28th, 1856.

DEAR COL. ORMEROD:

I have cleared up my affairs at last, and propose to sail from New York on the first steamer in October.

In the meantime, however, I am sending on, by arrangement with the Transit Company, a shipment of arms purchased by Mr. Law and myself, including two twelve-pound mountain howitzers, and four hundred Minie rifles, together with a supply of ammunition. These go to you at once. I expect to bring with me four twelve-pound Coehoorn mortars and shells for them. I am sanguine that these pieces will help us to solve the trouble of routing enemies out of the adobe-walled towns which constitute your Central American fortresses.

Mr. Law wishes to be remembered to you.

With sincere regards to General Walker, whose amazing success is winning him hosts of friends, I have the honor to be Yr hble svt,

CHARLES F. HENNINGSEN.

IV

THE termination of the rainy season ushered in a period of battles. From morning to night, now, the sun shone with tropical fervor, tempered by the sweep of the trades, which caught up the powdered mud of street and road, and blew it hither and yon continuously. In place of the rain, clouds of dust obscured the picture, a grimy film behind which trudged long, slipshod columns of allies in soiled white uniforms, and thick clumps of American riflemen—tall, lanky figures, springy at the knees, tanned faces set against the gritty lash of the wind, the whirling *papagaya*.

Politics and statecraft were forgotten; this was the soldier's hour. And perhaps for that reason the de Avilas seemed to Ormerod to sink into comparative unimportance. Frailer than ever, Don Jaime trotted about Granada performing certain shadowy functions of office, and the señorita moved beside him, aloof, unhurried.

In Leon the allies patched up their differences, and marched southward, watched by a screen of Jenkins' Rangers, while Walker withdrew his garrisons from Managua and Masaya, and concentrated in Granada all his troops not stationed along the line of the Transit, preferring to lure the enemy within easy reach of his fist rather than obstruct the hostile advance.

"The surest way to cure a boil is to let it come to a head, then lance it vigorously," said he to those of his officers who argued that they should at least attempt to hold Masaya, a falcon's nest perched on the flank of a volcano some twelve miles from Granada.

So the allies entered Masaya, and in the elation of their unexpected success proceeded to quarrel again, with the consequence that Zavala and his Guatemalans abandoned the main body under Canedo and marched off to quarter themselves in the neighboring village of Diriomo. As it chanced, Walker was ignorant of this fresh dissension in the enemy's ranks, and he chose the moment of Zavata's retirement from Masaya to launch one of those lightning blows which had terrified his opponents in the past. With Henningsen's howitzers to help him, he would attack the allies behind their barricades, pound them to pieces, harry the remnants of them helter-skelter to the north.

He marched from Granada with eight hundred men, the First and Second Rifles, the First and Second Light Infantry, three or four troops of Rangers, a handful of artillerymen—skeleton battalions, if you please, a makeshift of an army; but without pretense. Saunders' First Rifles carried with them into battle the new flag which Walker had designed for Nicaragua—the same broad central stripe of white, with narrow outer stripes of blue, but instead of five volcanoes on the central stripe a five-pointed star of red, representing, as had the volcanoes, the five states of Central America. And on their flag the Rifles had sewn an additional inscription in letters of red flannel, chopped out with a sword blade: "Five or none."

There was the spirit of the filibusters, Ormerod thought, as the hoarse cheers of the column greeted the first display of Saunders' legend.

"Five or none!" "That's the word, boys!" "We'll win 'em all!" "This is only the fust b'ar!" " 'Ray for Uncle Billy and the Central American Union!"

They reached Masaya after dusk, drove in the allies' pickets and camped for the night in the outer suburbs. Canedo, taken by surprize, his motley array of Salvadorians, Hondurans and Nicaraguans dismayed by this sudden appearance of the dreaded *Yanquis*, hustled a string of couriers to summon the Guatemalans to his aid, and in the meantime toiled at the strengthening of the barricades. Zavala, however, decided that this was an excellent opportunity to strike a blow on his own account, and secure a rich haul of plunder, too—plunder which he need not divide with others. So he waited only to make certain that Walker was committed to the attack on Masaya, and then led his men by a circuitous road around the left

flank of the filibusters, descending upon Granada like a bolt from the blue.

Walker, still supposing the entire force of the allies was opposed to him, opened with his howitzers on Masaya at dawn, while Canedo gnawed his fingernails, harangued his officers and proclaimed that deserters should be executed. But the howitzer shells soon blasted a path for the Americans to the Plazuela San Sebastian, the first of the allies' strong-points, and Canedo was pushed back into the main Plaza so rapidly that his men had to leave their breakfasts on the cooking-fires, to the delight of the attackers, who immediately gobbled down a second morning meal.

With the lesson of Rivas distinct in his memory, Walker embarked next upon a stubborn, but skilfully contrived, drive from house to house, keeping his men under cover, working with pick and shovel as much as with rifles. The howitzers were brought to bear upon any resistance too tenacious to be overcome by these tactics, and slowly, hour by hour, the Rifles and the Light Infantry cut their way along the streets, until that evening they had gained the boundary walls of several buildings fronting on the Plaza. In the course of the day's fighting they had suffered slight loss, themselves, and had inflicted very considerable losses upon their enemies. The allies were discouraged; victory was at hand; one more charge in the open beneath a shower of howitzer shells would hurl Canedo out of the Plaza.

But the destiny that so often favored Walker liked to play tricks with him sometimes. Jenkins rode in at midnight with the startling information that a patrol sent to Granada to fetch out a train of stores had been fired upon as they approached the Jalteva suburb; the frontiersman had heard heavy and continuous firing in the heart of the city. From fugitive citizens he had learned that Zavala's Guatemalans had been fighting since morning with the little garrison of two hundred men who remained in the city under command of Colonel Fry. At last reports, the Americans still held the Government House, the Parochial and other buildings around the Plaza, the American Legation, which had been attacked, and the Casa de Avila; but it was doubtful if they could hold out much longer.

Walker saw the fruit of his efforts destroyed, but he neither winced at the responsibility of a decision nor hesitated to sacrifice his immediate advantage. Tired as his men were, he mustered them as speedily as the darkness and confusion of the attack permitted, abandoned the ground he had won without any interference from Canedo, and back-tracked for Granada. He could not do anything else. Aside from the damage to his prestige if the allies were allowed to capture the city, it contained his treasury, depot of stores, civil records and hospital.

At nine o'clock that morning the column came under the fire of two guns the Guatemalans had placed at the barricade by the Jalteva Church, but a single round from a howitzer dispersed the hostile artillerymen, and with a whoop and a yell the Rifles were over the barricade and charging into the streets leading to the Plaza. It was a year to a day since Walker had taken Granada from the Legitimists, but the fighting this October 13th was much sharper and bloodier than on the morning the *Falange* had rushed in through the lake suburbs. For there was evidence of cruelty strewn about the streets to steel the Americans to a ruthlessness they would not otherwise have shown. The stripped bodies of two missionaries, corpses of non-combatants hacked with bayonets, children shot down out of hand. And the survivors of the garrison who ran out to meet them croaked other tales to rouse a fury of revenge which refused to spare any prisoners, except wounded men and a few officers.

On the whole, the Americans came well out of the two actions. They had lost a hundred killed and wounded as against six or eight times that number of casualties in the allied ranks. They had sapped the initiative of their opponents, supplied them with new grounds for dissension. But on the opposite side of the ledger was to be entered the fact that the allied governments were stirred to greater endeavors by this demonstration of the filibusters' power. Costa Rica, having shaken off the effects of the *colerin*, was finally persuaded to dispatch a second force against the Transit, thanks to the freely-spent dollars of the Commodore. And the increasing emphasis which Walker laid upon the use of Americans, employing his native troops solely for garrison duty in unimportant posts, combined with the severity of his rule and the arrogance of his followers, operated to

widen the gap between the Nicaraguans and the filibusters.

In this time the señorita's eyes were wells of sorrow.

"Alas, my father lived before his time—as I have. It is dreadful to be born out of sympathy with one's era, Peter. There is a loneliness of the soul that is more appalling than any desert island could be. Poor Rafael! I know how he felt."

"He was weak," growled Ormerod. "A traitor is a traitor, whatever you say."

"Ah, yes, weak," she agreed. "But sometimes, perhaps, it is more comfortable to be weak than to be strong. There is a penalty for every privilege."

V

HENNINGSEN'S arrival heartened the filibusters more than the addition of another battalion to their ranks. The big Englishman's friendly manner, his unfailing courtesy, his rich equipment of military knowledge, secured him popularity with all save a handful of officers who begrudged him the brigadier-general's commission Walker gave him. To Ormerod's great relief he made an immediate favorable impression upon Walker, and got along with the filibuster chief as successfully as the survivors of "The Fifty-eight" for whose opinions or vagaries Walker always had an indulgence shared with no other group. Henningsen even became one of the few with whom the commander would discuss his plans, and his advice was tolerated and occasionally accepted.

"I begin to think the general has had a change of heart," the señorita remarked sarcastically to Ormerod one day after Walker had acquiesced to a statement of Henningsen's that their position in Granada was false and strained. "Or shall I credit my ears? Did I really hear him agree with General Henningsen that we ought to be closer to the Transit?"

"You surely did," assented Ormerod.

He liked to find her in a light humor, for it was seldom, indeed, that she emerged nowadays from the moody ways that had engulfed her.

"But don't attach too much importance to it," he went on, smiling. "In the first place, General Henningsen is absolutely a soldier, and a soldier, alone. He has no interest in politics. Have you observed that? He speaks only to matters of military fact or theory. In the second place, he's very diplomatic in a blunt fashion."

"And in the third place," she exclaimed, "he had the good fortune to bring up a point on which the general already had made up his mind."

"That may be," Ormerod agreed doubtfully. "But how do you know? He hasn't said anything—"

"It is not necessary that he should. That is the most intelligent course he could pursue. I am not a soldier, but I can see that. And whatever else General Walker is, he is intelligent. Did not Major Jenkins bring news yesterday that the Costa Ricans were in San Juan del Sur? That means they have the Transit blocked. If General Walker permits the Transit to be blocked he will be strangled to death. You will see."

She was right, as usual, Ormerod found. That night Walker convened the last meeting of the Council of State, a hasty, informal session; he simply called Ormerod to him after dinner at the Government House, and said, "Come with me to the Casa de Avila. I have something to say to Don Jaime." And during the short walk through the moonlit streets he did not utter another word, striding purposefully along with his chin buried in his stock. Don Jaime and the señorita were at work in the salon—that is, Don Jaime was making a pretense of studying a file he had probably read over a dozen times, a notification from some *jefe politico* that the village taxes were uncollectable or complaining that a Legitimist recruiting detachment had pressed his young men; the señorita made no pretense; she was reading a French novel.

Don Jaime looked up with a flare of interest.

"Ah, *mi general*, thees ees an 'onair unexpected. A chair?"

"Thanks," replied Walker briefly, shaking his head. "Good evening, Señorita Maria. I trust you are well? That is good. You will pardon me, if I speak with your father?"

"You are to tell him you shall evacuate Granada," she answered as briefly.

Walker raised his eyebrows.

"You have a gift of divination, it seems. That is quite correct."

"But w'at ees thees you say?" gasped de Avila. "Evacuate Granada? Abandon the

city to the enemy? It ees unthinkable! No, no, my frien', thees you can not do. For w'at else have we fought, have we strrive, have we bleed—"

"I regret the necessity as much as yourself, Don Jaime," interrupted Walker; "but as it is a necessity my regret is unavailing. The enemy have been heavily reinforced in Masaya; they are pouring troops steadily across the northern frontier. The Costa Ricans are in San Juan del Sur. Presently they will occupy Rivas. I must keep the Transit open, and I can not spare a sufficient number of men for that, and have an adequate force remaining to hold Granada."

Don Jaime slumped in his chair.

"Thees—thees ees my 'ome," he stammered. "An' we 'ave fought so hard to take it. Shall we become a state wizhout a capital?"

"Granada is only a city," answered Walker sternly.

"The general is in the right," said the señorita. "Without the Transit we are lost. That must come first."

Walker bowed to her.

"I am glad that you perceive the situation, señorita; but honesty compels me to inform you and Don Jaime that I can not leave Granada to the enemy in such shape that they can employ it as a fortress against me in the future."

Her great eyes widened; a pallor spread slowly across Don Jaime's wrinkled cheeks.

"*Jesu!*" she murmured. "You would destroy it?"

"I must."

Her father's mouth quivered.

"Destroy Granada?" he repeated. "Thees city which 'ave been 'ere for thrrree' undrrred year'? Ah, no, *mi general!* Theenk again. 'Ere 'ave my family live' since Gil Gonzalez, zhe *conquistador* ees come over zhe sea. No, no, we do not burrrn Granada!"

"I must," Walker reiterated firmly.

"But 'ere 'ave live' twenty-five thousan' people," pleaded de Avila. "'Ere are grrreat churches, fine 'ouses. W'at ees Nicaragua wizhout Granada?"

"I repeat that I regret what I must do, Don Jaime," said Walker. "But do it I must. If I do not hold Granada, our enemies shall not. And do not be so concerned about it. After we have won we will rebuild Granada handsomer than ever. Why, it is half in ruins, today!"

"Yes, better to burn and destroy it than to accept defeat for love of brick and stone," spoke up the señorita. "We have set our hands to the plow. Shall we draw back because the furrow leads across our hearth?"

"It seems very hard, General," said Ormerod.

"Life is hard," Walker replied, in a tone which forbade further comment.

The filibuster turned to Don Jaime.

"I hope to rely on your assistance in this affair, my friend. Will you take over the civil government of the city for the time being? I must be constantly on the move for the next few weeks. It will be necessary, first, to clear the Costa Ricans from the Transit, and after that I shall strike the allies in Masaya again to discourage them from interfering with our plans. It is essential that I should have some one here upon whom I can rely to manage the native population, and explain to them finally the reasons for so drastic a policy as I must adopt."

The old statesman lifted listless eyes to Walker's face, unmoved by the other's agony of spirit.

"I have never fail' you, señor," he answered. "I shall not now, although it seem' to me you wreak much 'arm to win a result mos' questionable."

"That the future must decide," Walker returned. "I do not hesitate to assume full responsibility for what I do. Our immediate concern is not to save any town or city, but to use every resource available to defeat the invaders. I have no doubt of our ability to do so as long as the Transit remains open."

"After all, why should we be concerned for what we do?" asked the señorita. "We are in the hands of destiny. Destiny will decide."

"Just so," assented Walker, with a keen glance at her. "And I feel that destiny is with us, señorita."

"Destiny is always with us," she retorted, picking up her book; "but that does not mean it will favor us."

Outside in the street Walker tarried to look up at the round, yellow moon climbing above the Chontales shore across the lake.

"I am not superstitious," he remarked, "but I will admit that on occasion that young woman makes me uncomfortable."

Ormerod smiled secretly at this new manifestation of the filibuster's strange personality.

"She has a perceptiveness out of the common," he answered.

"I had an old Scotch nurse when I was a child," Walker continued deliberately. "I believe if Elspeth were here she would say the señorita was fey. I beg your pardon. Did you say something?"

"No, no," blundered Ormerod. "I—I—it seemed—that is, that sort of thing—it's not really—"

"I am afraid I have been talking nonsense," apologized Walker. "Pray forget it, sir. We will go on to General Henningsen's quarters. I shall leave him in charge of the evacuation here, and at his request, you will remain to assist him. I was delighted to discover he was in agreement with me as to the advisability of taking this step."

VI

LIKE a clever boxer fighting two powerful but clumsy opponents, Walker struck left and right with dazzling celerity. On Nov. 11th, with Henningsen and Hornsby, he maneuvered the Costa Ricans out of the fortified position they had constructed athwart the Transit, hammered their flight until it became a rout and finally chased them through San Juan del Sur and northeast again to Rivas, where he was content to leave them for the present. Hurrying back to Granada, he mustered five hundred and sixty men, and on the 15th marched a second time against Masaya. Halfway to his objective Jenkins brought him news that Canedo had just started from Masaya with eight hundred men to join the Costa Ricans in Rivas. This might indicate an attempt to overthrow the handful of infantry left at Virgin Bay to keep the Transit open. So Walker sent off two hundred and sixty of his little column to reinforce the Virgin Bay garrison, and nothing daunted, kept on his way with three hundred men to attack some three thousand allies remaining in Masaya.

Heroic folly! Ormerod and many another heard his orders with the resignation of despair, expecting they must all be trapped in the close-walled streets and shot down at leisure by such superior numbers. But the magic of Walker's name was equivalent to an additional five hundred Rifles. The allies never dreamed of adopting the offensive against him. They remained behind their barricades, permitted Henningsen to blow them to pieces with his guns, and fighting doggedly enough, but wholly without hope, retired, house by house and street by street, in face of the mad determination of the Americans' attack. Ten to one, and they were supine! So steady was the advance that Walker decided to press in earnest what he had intended to be a feint, a gesture. And all day of the 16th the filibusters struggled on, hewing a passage from house to house; sometimes they found still available the breaches they had cut in the first attack a month past.

All night of the 16th they fought, and all day of the 17th, and that night up to midnight. Then exhaustion overcame them; they had been marching and fighting continuously for three days, with nothing but water to drink and hard bread to eat; their ammunition was mostly gone, the howitzer shells all fired away; and they had lost one hundred killed and wounded, a third of their strength. They were only thirty yards from the Plaza, but they might as well have been within thirty miles. So tired were they that sentries dropped asleep on post, and had the allies possessed any confidence they might easily have captured the entire force.

With his usual cold logic, Walker accepted the situation. The wounded were mounted on horseback, and sent off under escort of Jenkins; Henningsen and a rear-guard of the strongest of the survivors remained to cover the retreat. But as on the occasion of the first battle of Masaya, they had crippled the allies so severely that no serious effort was made to harass them. By noon of the 18th they were all safe in Granada, and Walker turned his energies to organizing the evacuation of the capital. If he had not been able to capture Masaya, at least he had secured the breathing-spell which was essential to his major purpose. And on the 19th of November a great moan went up from Granada as the inhabitants read of their city's doom:

REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA
GOD! UNION! LIBERTY!

By the President:

1. Brigadier-general Henningsen is appointed Military Governor of Granada. The Licentiate Don Jaime de Avila continues as Civil Administrator, in addition to his duties as Secretary for Internal Relations.

2. General Henningsen will proceed at once to destroy the city as expeditiously as possible.

3. The civil population will realize that this step

is taken as a measure of military necessity. Any opposition to it will be repressed without mercy.

By the President.

Peter C. Ormerod, Col., Chief of Staff.

There was a rush to the churches. In front of the altars the miserable people prostrated themselves, praying to that Mystic Presence which seemed so heedless of their agony. They ran through the streets, weeping and wringing their hands; the women let down their hair. Before the Casa de Avila gathered a throng of citizens of the better class, clamoring for Don Jaime to intercede for them.

"Speak for us," they pleaded. "Tell him we shall be ruined, our women without shelter, our children homeless. Must we suffer, who have done him no harm? Why should we, alone in Nicaragua, have to pay so bitter a price for the dissensions of all our brothers?"

They cried to the señorita, who stood beside her father in the shadow of the *zaguan:*

"You are a woman! Do you go to him, señorita. Be the voice of your sisters. Surely he will listen to you who are so wise."

There were tears in Don Jaime's eyes, and in the face of the señorita shone a compassion which drew little murmurs from the crowd:

"Ah, the good lady!" "Like a saint she is!" "This is none of her doing!" "*El Presidente* will listen to *her!*"

It was she who answered them:

"We will go to General Walker, but do not let your hopes be raised. We are living in hard times. And a people must pay a price for everything. Perhaps this will be the price you pay for liberty."

"*Sí, sí,*" quavered Don Jaime. "Already you have the ballot-box, my friends. Much we have won, much. We shall yet win more."

The crowd heard without understanding. All *politicos* talked thus, and the Granadinos rather liked the vagueness of the promises—for what stuck in their minds was simply the promise of intercession. It was incredible to them that Walker would refuse to grant anything the de Avilas asked of him. So the petitioners dispersed happily, and went about their affairs or stood idly watching the American soldiers transporting ordnance stores and supplies down to the Playa by the lakeshore, where the sidewheelers lay at the wharf. The word spread through the city that all should yet be well.

At the Government House Ormerod received the de Avilas, and listened to their errand with a pity he tried to dissemble; but the señorita detected it.

"You are sorry for us, Peter?" she said. "You think we waste our time? Well, so do I, but our people have asked us to speak for them, and however useless it is, we must obey them."

"But it ees not useless," protested de Avila. "The general will hear reason. He is a mos' reasonable man. He—"

"What is reason?" asked the señorita. "Have we not disagreed with him as to that in the past?"

It fell out as she predicted. Busy as he was, Walker gave them all the time they required; but he was unflinching in resisting every argument Don Jaime could bring to bear—the señorita spoke but once.

"I am sure you believe you do right," she said. "I am sure our troubles will be increased if Granada is abandoned to the allies. But would it not be better to yield the enemy an advantage than to cause the suffering this measure means?"

"You are guided by sentiment in that plea, señorita," replied Walker kindly. "As a matter of absolute fact, we shall not do any considerable harm in destroying Granada. The country's population has shrunk so in consequence of a generation of warfare that there are thousands of empty houses in other cities. The people who leave Granada can find shelter elsewhere. But even if they were obliged to roam the countryside I should persist in my plan, for I can not squander my men's lives in capturing this city again."

Don Jaime rose shakily.

"Thees ees my end," he said. "My people will 'ave no rrrespec' for me any more. I am a tyrrrant, they will say, a *Yanqui!*"

"That will be a part of the price *we* must pay," commented the señorita.

And that night Ormerod found it necessary to station a guard of Rifles at the Casa de Avila, for a mob had collected in the street outside and battered fiercely on the double-doors of the *zaguan,* shouting, "Death to the Yankee-lovers!" "Burn the traitors!" "Give us the witch that has betrayed our city!"

When Ormerod had dispersed the rioters as gently as possible, he picketed his men in the central courtyard and sought out the

unhappy owners of the vast, old mansion. Don Jaime sat at his desk, staring at the blank wall, and accepted in silence Ormerod's apology for the disorder and assurance of protection.

"Yes," he said heavily, "it ees a bad time when a de Avila mus' 'ave prrrotection in Granada!"

The señorita laid down her book as calmly as if Ormerod had come to make a formal call.

"Shall our guards require food?" she asked.

"Not this evening," answered Ormerod, and he continued hesitantly, "General Walker asked me to say that—in view of tonight's occurrence—perhaps you and Don Jaime would prefer to go with him to Virgin Bay tomorrow?"

The señorita raised her eyebrows, and looked questioningly at her father. Don Jaime flushed.

"No, no," he exclaimed. "I will not 'ave it said I fled. I am civil administrator, zhe general 'ave ask me to assist in zhe evacuation. *Buenol* I stay 'ere wizh General Henningsen."

Omerod started to leave, feeling more disgusted than ever with the whole business. Then he had a sudden thought.

"You are not alone?" he queried. "Your aunt—where is she, señorita? Would she like to go with the—"

Don Jaime's flush became more pronounced; the señorita smiled faintly.

"Oh, she left us months ago—after Don Rafael's defection," she answered. "We are not what might be termed popular with our friends—that is, those who used to be our friends."

"I'm sorry," Ormerod apologized abjectly. "Didn't know—wouldn't have—"

"I understand, Peter," she said quietly, and her eyes met his with a frankness the two had not known since the day of his return from New York.

VII

THE people of Granada were stunned by this tragedy which had overtaken them. No longer did they weep as they straggled in tenuous processions over the roads to near-by towns and *pueblas*, burdened with such household goods as they could carry or pack in wooden-wheeled carts or on mule-back. They walked with their heads bowed, in silence, shuffling wearily in the dust of the way. Now and then a baby complained or an old woman gasped out a frantic prayer for the intercession of good, black San Benito; the cart wheels squeaked shrilly, fighting-cocks crowed on many an *Indio's* shoulder, and the mules' hoofs went *pitter-patter, pitter-patter*. But even when some family tarried to look back at the smoke already wreathing above the lighter-built suburbs they only sobbed quietly and signed the cross upon their breasts as they turned their faces hopelessly toward the road ahead.

In the city the work of destruction went on apace. On the 19th, two hundred of the sick and wounded were evacuated to Ometepe Island in the lake to await the preparation of hospitals for them at Rivas or San Jorge, where Walker planned to establish permanent headquarters for the remainder of the campaign. On the 20th, Walker himself embarked for Virgin Bay with the larger portion of his effective force and the bulk of the ordnance stores, government property and records, leaving Henningsen with some three hundred and fifty men, besides seventy sick and wounded, women and children, for whom there was no room on the steamers that day.

Neither Walker nor Henningsen anticipated any interference from the crippled allies in Masaya—and if Canedo did pluck up his courage enough to venture against Granada, what had Henningsen to fear behind his barricades, with seven cannon and four mortars, in addition to his troops, from three thousand cravens, who had cowered before the attack of a scant three hundred? They failed to reckon upon an enemy that was to spring up in their own ranks—the germ of demoralization, propagated by indiscriminate destruction. Walker's steamer was not hull-down on the lake when Henningsen's men had burst the bounds of discipline, most of the officers acting as ringleaders in the headlong debauchery which defied the slender remnants of authority.

Ormerod was checking over the dwindling ordnance stores at the *cuartel* when Mike Gilligan ran in, his flat features convulsed by a mixture of amusement and dismay.

"Glory be, Colonel, sorr, but every wan of me min is dhrunk, me loot'nent's as blind

as aany privut of the lot. What'll I do?"

Ormerod summoned Henningsen, and the three of them sallied out to investigate. They found the entire garrison, with two or three exceptions, in a state of intoxication. Von Ritterstein, rather drunk himself, but gravely capable of movement, interpreted the popular attitude.

"*Ach, Himmel,* my friendts, in every house dere is liquor, *sehr* goodt liquor. Shall we waste it? Shall we into der gutters put it? *Nein, nein!* We drink it up."

Henningsen was a capable officer, used to handling rough men, and he realized that he must proceed vigorously if he was to regain control of the situation.

"This is a gross breach of discipline, Colonel von Ritterstein," he began sternly.

The German straightened stiffly.

"I am on duty, *hein?* Hafe I not done vot I vas ordered to do?"

"You have allowed your men to drink themselves into a condition of stupidity in some cases," persisted Henningsen.

"Vell, some of dem can not drink as much as odders," von Ritterstein assented reasonably. "But we get der work done just der same, General. Don't you worry for dot. I drink, *ja*, but I do my work, you bet."

"We can't continue like this," warned Henningsen. "It endangers the whole force and the task General Walker appointed us to."

Von Ritterstein became impatient.

"You are a goodt fellow, General," he said. "Ormerod is a goodt fellow. So is Gilligan, *aber* he is not a chentleman—but dot's not his fault—"

"The —— I'm not!" Mike growled belligerently. "No Dutchman wid a skinful of dago rotgut can be afther—"

"Now, now, Mike," interposed Ormerod. "Colonel von Ritterstein didn't mean any insult—"

"And it's well for him if he didn't, for it's me would take all the pleasure in the worrld in drillin' him wid a forrty-five bullet aany day behind the Parochial," proclaimed Gilligan.

Von Ritterstein made him a wabbly bow.

"I recognize your rank, Captain," he answered. "You are entitled to satisfaction, andt if—"

"That will do," Henningsen exclaimed sharply. "I will shoot the man who tries to start a duel. Are you entirely crazy, both of you? Captain Gilligan, your sobriety led me to expect a higher sense of responsibility."

"Arrah, tell the Dutchman to keep the muffler on the clapper of his bell, then," advised Mike.

"No more, sir," Henningsen rebuked him. "As for you, Colonel von Ritterstein, you are second in command here, and your conduct is of a character to call for a court martial. No, no, you are not to speak until I have finished! With the lower ranks I will be lenient, in the circumstances. They have been under a constant strain for weeks, and I appreciate the temptation to which they have been exposed. But you, sir, owe General Walker an obligation greater than they do, and I have a very shrewd idea what he would say if he became aware of your conduct."

The German's face became purple; he drew himself up with greater stiffness than before, and saluted.

"If I drink, all der same I do my work—andt so do my men. You vill not hafe to gomplain of me, General Henningsen."

Then, in the guttural bark of the parade ground, he rasped—

"Orders?"

"A main guard of ten men," Henningsen stated briefly. "Sentries on the corners of the principal streets. Men who won't work to be sent to cells in the *cuartel*. Remember, we have no time to waste—every one must work."

Von Ritterstein's right hand snapped again to the brim of his slouch-hat.

"*Ja, Herr General.*"

Mike Gilligan winked at his ramrod back as he strode off.

"Shure, if I could carry me licker the like of that 'tis I'd be rampagin' wid the b'ys." The Irishman turned serious, conscious of Henningsen's eye on him. "But 'tis no way for a captain to be afther bearin' himself, and that's the God's truth, General, sorr."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Captain Gilligan," rejoined Henningsen, "because I am appointing you officer of the guard. Colonel Ormerod will be officer of the day. The two of you will hold your appointments until further notice. I must have two sober men to rely upon."

Gilligan's salute was sloppy compared to von Ritterstein's; butt here was no mistaking the alert confidence in his voice.

"Yes, sorr. I'll be sober. I'm wan of thim poor divils do be took sick the minit

they git to feelin' graand. So what's the use, says I."

"To your post, Captain," Henningsen answered, curbing a smile. And to Ormerod he added, "Not a particularly promising outlook. I think you had better fetch de Avila and his daughter to the Government House. With so many drunken toughs let loose—"

He broke off unhappily.

"I wouldn't have had this happen for my commission, Colonel."

"It's not your fault, sir," Ormerod tried to console him. "The general, himself, couldn't have stopped it, short of shooting a few men. We are mighty lucky that Jenkins isn't here. He's a fiend when he's in liquor."

"Something to be thankful for, eh?" returned Henningsen a trifle dolefully. "Well, there's no use fretting."

They parted behind the San Francisco Convent, and Ormerod made his way through the thickening pall of smoke to the side-street where the bulk of the Casa de Avila was spread over a square block. A tipsy Rifleman was on sentry-go in front of the *zaguan*, and received him with an inclination to pugnacity.

"Ye'll have to be agwine outer hyah, stranger. No, —— yore eyes, I don't keer if ye are a off'cer. *I'm* in charge here. Cap'n Mike Gilligan posted me this mornin', an' Cunnul Ormerod told *him* to put me hyah. An' what's more, the lady hyah give me all the *'guardiente* I wanted. So there's no—"

"I'm Colonel Ormerod, you fool," growled Ormerod. "Port arms! Attention! As you were! Now, you wait here for me—and if I catch you taking another drink I'll shoot you out of hand."

"Yes, suh, Cunnul, suh," mumbled the sentry.

Before he could say more the señorita hailed Ormerod from the *zaguan*.

"I see your Americans have succumbed to temptation as readily as our *Indios*," she observed. "Is that man safe to leave here? He has been asking for drink all afternoon."

Ormerod snatched the sentry's rifle from him, and knocked him down with the butt.

"Lie there, you dog," he snarled as the man rolled into the central gutter.

"What a pity you can't treat all of them like that," remarked the señorita, quite unconcerned. "Father has gone to look for General Henningsen."

"It's a bad business, admitted Ormerod. "Henningsen sent me to escort you to the Government House. If you'll pack a bag with what you need—"

She pointed into the doorway.

"I have had a bag packed since morning," she said sadly. "I foresaw something like this. It's the old story, Peter. For everything we do we pay. General Walker would destroy Granada. I wonder if perhaps Granada will destroy him?"

Ormerod picked up her bag, and cast a sour glance at the unconscious Rifleman.

"That's very unlikely," he returned. "Wish I hadn't hit that fellow so hard, now. You'd better come along with me. Your father is probably somewhere around the Plaza."

She stepped back a moment inside the arched portal, with its immense double-doors of rosewood, propped open; an inner doorway gave a glimpse of the patio.

"I suppose this is good-by," she murmured. "I am the last de Avila—and this is the last of the Casa de Avila. It has served its purpose. So it goes. Just like a person, Peter. We live, we do our appointed stint—and we die."

"Let's try and be cheerful," grunted Ormerod. "It's not easy, but—"

"Yes, but," she laughed. "That has been our story, hasn't it?"

He groaned.

"It has! Well, then, let's live out our story, without—without—"

She tucked her hand under his arm.

"Yes," she said softly, almost happily. "Let's just live out our story. That's the most any one can do. Take it as it comes, don't wince, laugh if you can—even—"

A cloud of smoke eddied down an alley and wrapped them in its sable cloak, and Ormerod clutched her tighter to him. In the darkness, in the midst of destruction, the roar of gunpowder in their ears, he felt that they were closer spiritually than they had ever been before.

VIII

FOR four days Granada vomited smoke and flame; the roar of gunpowder, the crash of falling walls, the crackling of a thousand fires, the shouts of men frenzied by the lust of destruction, all joined in a gigantic symphony of terror. A pillar of smoke towered

aloft as if a volcano had protruded from the city's foundations. The streets were littered with chunks of adobe, bricks and stones, and the shattered furniture the inhabitants had been unable to remove. And through this inferno reeled demoniac figures, wild-eyed, their faces smutted with charcoal, their clothing rent and burned, their voices hoarse from drunken singing.

Discipline went entirely by the board. Work Henningsen did compel from the garrison, but not Walker himself could have quelled the wholesale debauchery which was stimulated by an unlimited supply of liquor and the evil passions unleashed by the very work their commanders set them to. Scourings of the slums of big cities or frontiersmen for whom the frontier had become too tame, the filibusters were never easy to control, and in a situation like this the handful of men who stood by Henningsen were entirely helpless.

The first day Ormerod, Gilligan and two or three more who sobered up managed to keep the main guard and most of the sentries in a state of sensibility; but the temptations were too many, and despite threats and pleas for loyalty, the guard and the sentries resumed their share in the carousing. All that Henningsen could do was to take advantage of the universal drunkenness to fan the labor of destruction to a full measure of efficiency; and in this, at least, he succeeded.

No matter how tired they became, another round of drinks would bring the filibusters staggering to their feet, yelping gleefully as they assailed the stubborn remnants of the city. A competitive spirit finally possessed them, and different companies would strive to see which could demolish the most houses in a day; but this spirit also had its disadvantages, for it bred up a disposition to brawl, and brawls among rough men, who were all armed, were dangerous pastimes. Gradually, too, there grew up a personal hatred for Granada.

"Swine-dog," von Ritterstein would address some massive structure that had withstood a hundred earthquakes and demanded the detonation of petards to assist crowbar, pickaxe and torch, "you think to balk us. *Ach*, we will blow you up!"

A Rifleman, leering from a house-roof over the seething area of flames, shook his fist at the spectacle.

"—— yore muddy heart, Granada! Mud yo're built on, mud yo're built of—and we'll make yuh mud again."

By the 24th of November the greater part of the city was destroyed, except for the buildings around the Plaza and those lining the street which led from the Plaza to the Playa on the lakeside. Here and there in the midst of the waste of ruins isolated structures still resisted the assaults of the filibusters, all the way from the Plaza to the Jalteva suburb, and considerable sections continued to burn; but as a city, Granada had practically ceased to exist. That day the sick and wounded and the remaining non-combatants, including the de Avilas were shifted from the *cuartel* and the Government House to the Parochial, and von Ritterstein began the congenial task of wrecking the huge bulk of the San Francisco Convent, with its attached church, and the abandoned buildings on the other faces of the Plaza.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of the 24th Ormerod returned to the Plaza from the lakeside, where he had superintended the departure of the lake steamers with another cargo of government property. The steamers would be back from Virgin Bay the following evening, and by the morning of the 26th, he calculated, the garrison should be ready for evacuation. But as he passed the porch of the Parochial he noticed a crowd of women, evidently excited, and the señorita called to him.

"Colonel Ormerod! Peter! There is firing out toward the Jalteva."

Ormerod ran up the steps to her, nodding to Don Jaime, who stood close by, with an expression almost of vacancy in his face. The old man's eyes were fixed on the drifting smoke-banks, and the ruddy flicker of fires behind the San Francisco Convent.

"Our 'ouse ees burn' today," he said dully, speaking to no one in particular. "Colonel von Ritterstein told me. All zhe day yesterrday zhey destrroy it."

"I'm sorry, Don Jaime," replied Ormerod. "But what is this about firing out toward the Jalteva?"

De Avila shrugged his shoulders.

"I hear, but I do not zhink about it. I zhink about my city, my 'ouse."

"Hark," exclaimed the señorita, and a murmur rose from the other women.

Yes, there was no doubt about it. He could hear distinctly the heavy reports of muskets, the sharper explosions of rifles.

Mike Gilligan was stationed at the Jalteva, with a couple of guns. Why didn't they use their cannon, then? The question had barely formed in his mind when the boom of a smoking twelve-pounder resounded across the emptiness of the city. And while the echoes reverberated under the porch-roof of the Parochial another burst of firing sounded behind them in the direction of the lake, the direction whence Ormerod just had come. And a third racket broke out beyond the San Francisco Convent.

"Rafael ees come," de Avila stated impassively.

"I am afraid so," agreed the señorita, and with a bitterness she made no attempt to suppress, "Ah, why will your people persist always in underestimating us, Peter? We are weak, yes, but there is a limit to what we stand. Rafael is a fool, but he is no coward, and when he hears what goes on in Granada he *must* attack—or forfeit his manhood."

"What can we do with a mob of drunkards?" Ormerod retorted, equally bitter. "It will serve them right to be shot down as they carouse. ——, what a joke!"

Bullets commenced to rap on the stonework of the pillars, and he shouted to the women:

"You'll have to get indoors! Indoors, every one! Here, Don Jaime, will you—"

But de Avila only continued to stare blankly at the ruins of his city. Ormerod turned to the señorita.

"Then you, Maria! Will you take command here? I'll send some men as soon as we can spare any. I must find Henningsen."

"You need not be concerned about us," she answered calmly. "Come, father."

Don Jaime obeyed her in silence, and the rest of the women fluttered in front of the couple, chattering and exclaiming fearfully. Well they might, reflected Ormerod, racing across the Plaza. If Canedo's troops took the town after what had happened— He shut the thought from his mind. Where was Henningsen? What a muddle!

Under the wall of the convent he came upon a thin line of Riflemen, hastily throwing up a pile of débris to barricade the street which flanked the immense structure. The whistling of musket balls told Ormerod they had reason for their haste; the allies must be streaming into that street in considerable strength. But he kept on until the tall figure of von Ritterstein loomed in the smoke.

"Where's the general?" he called.

"Ha, *das ist du*, Ormerod? Der general? He is gone back toward der lake; dere was a message dot der Guadalupe Church was taken."

Ormerod's heart skipped a beat. The Guadalupe taken! That meant the enemy controlled the street leading from the Plaza to the Playa, the street up which he had recently come, the only route of retreat to the lake steamers. This street was perhaps half a mile long, and was dominated by three structures: the Parochial, on the corner of the Plaza, the church of Esquipulus, something more than a block distant from the Parochial, and the Guadalupe, which was as far from Esquipulus as the latter was from the Parochial. Of the three buildings, the Guadalupe was vital to the defense in that its possession was essential to their ability to extricate themselves.

"That's bad," said Ormerod. "We must be surrounded."

"*Ja*," returned the German phlegmatically. "At t'ree places they attack us. Gilligan has a fight out at der Jalteva. *Gott* knows what becomes of him! Nobody can help him, dot's sure."

"And all this comes from drunkenness," barked Ormerod. "From drunken folly."

Von Ritterstein said nothing for a moment.

"*Ja*," he answered finally. "Do you stay mit us? We need men."

"I'll stay here," decided Ormerod. "One sober man won't hurt."

Von Ritterstein swayed ponderously.

"If I be drunk, I fight, Ormerod. Dot's right, you bet! Now, you take der men inside der convent, andt don't let der greasers over der roof, see? Andt I keep here by der barricade."

The next hour was a nightmare. Canedo had flung between three and four thousand men into the city from three different directions. The Guadalupe he had carried at once. His chief attack, however, was upon the San Francisco Convent, for if he stormed that he controlled the Plaza; and his scrawny little *Indios*, hardly as tall as their bayoneted muskets, swarmed again and again to the charge. It looked to Ormerod as if they must succeed, for von Ritterstein's Riflemen were worn out by four days of systematic debauchery, and the constant

firing in their rear tended to demoralize men, whose nerves had been shattered by such excesses. But von Ritterstein held them to the defense by sheer force of personality. He seldom spoke, yet he seemed to be everywhere, stoical, scorning cover, quick to see the slightest tendency to yield, to feel the development of weak spots in the line.

The crisis came on the verge of dusk, and as Canedo massed his troops for a last push, Henningsen galloped into the *zaguan* of the convent, which served as a makeshift headquarters. The soldier of fortune was as dirty as any of his men; his beard was singed; his hat had been pierced; his sword was broken. But his calmness rivaled von Ritterstein's.

"You are hard-pressed?" he asked, peering up the street at the twinkling bayonets of the allies. "Well, we *must* hold the convent for the night. The Guadalupe is lost. Gilligan beat off an attack at the Jalteva, and succeeded in fighting his way to the Parochial. He will be here shortly to help you. In the meantime—"

"Der best defense is der offense, General," interjected von Ritterstein.

"How?" questioned Henningsen. "What's that?"

"If you want to defend yourself, you attack," explained the German. "Dot's General Walker's way. It's a goodt way—*ja!*"

"I agree with you," said Henningsen curtly. "What do you suggest?"

"Give me one company, der freshest men," answered von Ritterstein. "We chase dose greasers to ——."

"It will be dangerous—"

"*Ja*, dot's right," assented von Ritterstein; "*aber* it was my fault der men was drunk."

Henningsen reached down his hand.

"I don't altogether agree with you there, Colonel," he said warmly. "But if we can save the convent tonight we may be able to save the garrison tomorrow. Good luck to you!"

"We save it," the German promised gravely, shaking the proffered hand.

With Ormerod to help him, he collected thirty-two men who seemed to have the wind and stamina for a headlong charge. Thirty-two men! Henningsen wagged his head thoughtfully.

"It's suicide, I'm afraid, gentlemen. But I dare not refuse you. If the convent falls— Humph! Go ahead."

Over the barricade scrambled the thirty-two, their officers in the lead, stooping low in the drifting smoke, whooping each other on.

"Remember the wounded at Rivas, boys!" "Give 'em ——!" "Five or none!"

Thirty-two men against a thousand! Ormerod laughed at himself as he charged.

"Always was a —— fool! Serves me right. S'pose we'll all get assassinated. But there's the señorita—Maria. Got to look after her—"

The next moment he crossed swords with a Guatemalan, and shot the poor wretch with his pistol. He parried a bayonet thrust, and drove his sword-blade through a man's chest. Ugh! Not pleasant, that. Out of the corner of his eye he saw von Ritterstein slash a Honduran from collar-bone to pelvis, tug at the wedged blade as the corpse sagged away from him and charge on, empty pistol in hand.

Then the ranks of the enemy split like a block of soft wood under ax blows, and the Rifles were all amongst them, shooting and stabbing with bowie-knives. One moment Ormerod was staring at a streetful of monkey-faces; the next he saw only a herd of dirty-white backs, milling frantically to escape the slaughter.

"*Vorwarts!*" thundered von Ritterstein. "*Vorwarts*, men! After dem. Butts andt knives!"

He tripped, as if a stick had been poked between his legs, and fell against the convent wall.

"*Ach!*" Von Ritterstein coughed. "In der lungs."

A bubble of blood showed on his lips.

"Lie down," cried Ormerod. "I'll find a surgeon."

"*Nein, nein*, I die standing. Mit my boots on. Dot's right! It is my own fault, Ormerod. I shouldt not hafe let der men drink. *Ja*, badt for discipline it is." He coughed again, and a second bubble welled from his lips. "A soldier must not forget discipline. Mitout discipline he is not a soldier—a beast. *Ach, Gott!*"

Blood flooded from his mouth in an awful tide, and he lurched sidewise as Ormerod caught him, the cheering of the Rifles in his ears.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE BLEEDING HAND OF ULSTER

By John Dorman

Author of "The War Cats of Duggan O'Day," "Intrigue Mexican," etc.

LEAN, like the royal palms shading his driftwood shack on Palm Beach, was Mallock Buronne—as lean, but rather less graceful; and it is true that in his later days his body tapered both ways from the middle, as had the trunks of the palms when they were very young.

Buronne is long since dead, of course, and these same royal palms guard the "cottage" of a war-made millionaire. And the beach, over whose glistening miles Buronne was lord supreme, has acquired a rating by the front foot in realty offices.

Buronne would not like the beach now—it was nameless when first he knew it—as he liked it in the days when he walked fifteen miles to get his supplies of tobacco and groceries, paying for them in fur. All that he could not furnish for himself or find on the beach, he carried on his back from the trading station on the site of the present town of Fort Lauderdale, where a lone white man did honest business with the Seminoles, and cursed the government for the inhuman Seminole Indian war.

Dying, Buronne left a thick volume of poetry of his own composing. A whole enormous old bound ledger full of it, inscribed in a fine, flourishing hand, and garnished with carefully wrought initial letters.

More carelessly written, on cheap paper, was an account of the occasion when he nursed a hunting party of Seminoles through a seige of small pox in an encampment on the New River. He mentioned that six out of the fifteen died, that they belonged to Osceola's own, and that one of them had a hemorrhage of the lungs, so that "I was continually sickened and weak from the sight of his blood about him."

This appears to have been in the late forties, "soon after I came down here." Where he came from no one now remembers.

On the same rough paper, the hermit-hunter-poet wrote, and more at length, of the time when Jamie Durrant visited him, seeking medical attention for a wounded hand.

Of Durrant, the account says that he was a little man, very Irish, and without doubt the bravest lad and the most unregenerate liar Buronne had ever encountered.

"Possibly given to exaggeration in his account of himself," Buronne wrote, "but evidently a man of some education, and a natural orator."

Obviously, Buronne placed no value on the two accounts; seemingly the two papers which bore them had served as book marks. Curiously, they and the matters of which they treat are nearly all of his life and writing that survives him. His poetry was insipid and flat; his fiction dealt stiltedly of court life in Europe.

Several times during the decades that elapsed between the winter day in seventy when Durrant came staggering along the beach, and the spring day in the nineties when Buronne died—with the whistle of a much-hated old wood-burning locomotive on the Florida East Coast Line in his ears—the hermit told the tale of the small

Irishman to chance visitors. Nor did he attempt to magnify the part he played in the matter. He was a mild man, without vanity, and neither surprized nor ashamed that he sickened at the sight of blood, and often was a whole hour skinning a raccoon because of his fits of vomiting.

HE FIRST saw Jamie coming slowly along the beach from the southward. The little man received the surgical attention he needed, stayed two days, and boasted of his exploits. Then he went off up the trail to Jacksonville, and out of the hermit's life.

Buronne was digging at the water's edge for coquina clams—the exquisitely colored little mollusks, hardly larger than beans, which furnish such an excellent base for soup—when he caught sight of Jamie, reeling and tottering as he walked, and often standing stock still while waves larger than the ordinary surged up around his ankles. It was easier walking on the hard-packed sands at the surf line, and the Atlantic was not yet calmed from a bit of a blow the night before.

As the man came nearer Buronne saw that he was small and young. No more than three or four inches over five feet in height, and a hundred twenty pounds in weight; no more than twenty-seven or -eight years in age. He was hatless, and the sun struck gold on his tousled red hair. He wore only a shirt and broad white sea-trousers, and his left arm was supported in a sling made of his flowing tie.

He raised his right hand in a half salute as he stopped before the silent Buronne, who saw that the hand was swollen and discolored beyond all believing.

"Good day, sir," said Jamie, trying to stand steadily on bare feet which dripped blood where shells had cut them. "Jamie Durrant, sir; second mate of the old *Florence Brighton*, the finest bark ever out of Baltimore in the Rio coffee trade. And may the souls of her men rest in peace as their bodies never did!"

Burronne spoke at last, giving his name, and asking—

"Shipwrecked?"

Jamie nodded.

"A couple of days back, when we came to blows with a trans-Atlantic whale. The old man and the bosun and four sailors took to the whaleboat the skipper used as his private carriage. The first and myself and three sailors in the long boat.

"After dark, it was, and we separated within an hour. My boat made the coast, as ye see, but overturned in the surf. The waves threw me and the steering oar up on the beach. —— knows what they did to the rest of us! I saw your smoke this morning, and it's 'til now I've been a-getting here." Nearing sunset, it was then.

Buronne nodded vaguely.

"A whale?" he asked. "And you are bad hurt?"

Jamie laughed raggedly, digging a bare foot into the sand and crushed shell.

"A whale," he said. "And hurt bad enough to need the services of a doctor. Are ye skilled at amputation?"

Buronne paled. "That' bad?"

Jamie grinned.

"It's gangrene that I have or I never have seen it. What do we use for tools? Love of ——, man, what's ailing ye?"

The hermit passed a thin hand over his greenish face, but did not speak.

"——'s haven!" snapped Jamie. "Ye might at least give me a drink of water! Can't remember that I've had one for a day or two. Not that it matters, of course."

Dazed, stumbling along, Buronne led him up to the shack and literally fed him food and water, adding a generous dram of trader's whisky for good measure.

"There—there was a whale?" the hermit asked.

"Did I not tell ye? Old Jonah's gondola himself, it may be! Sure and none but a sperm whale has a gullet to swallow a man! We raised him at day break, and he spouted and waved his flukes around us all day. Just at sunset he sounded so long we thought we had seen the last of him.

"Then he came out of the sea dead ahead, with a young fountain a-blowing from his forecastle deck. Bow to bow he struck us, and the *Brighton* jumped back her length.

" 'Twas a duel to death, big man. He stove us in forward, shoving our stem in a yard, and opening every forward seam. And we smashed his old forefoot clean back into his after hold. He was near as big as the bark was, too.

"He turned over and died, and the whole ocean was red with his blood— ——'s haven, man, does the mention of blood turn ye to gagging and spewing? 'Tis a bit of

blood ye are needing yerself—old Irish blood, by my choosing! Bah! Big as a house, and afraid of a little bone sawing! I'd do it myself, but my right arm is stiff as a poker from wallowing about in the surf, and it's the left hand I'm anxious to be losing, before the gangrene goes further.

"The *Brighton* was sinking as we left her, and in fending off my boat my hand got nipped 'tween her gun'ale and the *Brighton's* side— Now we'll start this amputation business."

He stared around the single room looking for tools to be used.

"THAT knife, and the bit of a saw there above ye, and that thong for a tourniquet, and those pliers, and maybe yer poker, so we can heat it and sear the flesh to stop the flow of blood. I've none to spare, it may be."

Buronne was retching again; once more there was an impatient, intolerant, raw edge on Jamie's laughter.

"Move, —— ye!"

Buronne moved. Turbulent and boisterous was Jamie's mirth.

"Lord love ye, Buronne, but it was a brave tilt we ran with old Cachelot! Stem to stem, and the *Brighton* yanked back like Father Neptune's hand was on her taffrail! Crazy old Don Juan of a whale! But belike he had a backful of harpoons and a disgust with all vessels!"

Whimsically he studied the purpling forearm as Buronne tightened the tourniquet. More softly he said.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Hermit, that we'll cut it midway between wrist and elbow— My eyes, I've been about here and there and most places, but I've seen no man so squeamish over a little blood-letting!

"Why, when I was a young un, the bandits got me in the hills behind Hankow, where I had no business being. And they had a fat priest that was captive, too. The day they towed me into camp they lashed him up to a tree and sliced him to pieces, slice by slice, and never a tremor about him! And he said his —— catechism, or whatever it is, without a let-up. Next day some other bandits boarded us, and I broke away in the skirmish. 'Tis the only fight ever I've run from, big man!"

"You were lucky," said Buronne, faintly, piling things on the table.

"YE'VE heard of the luck of the Irish! Why else should I come safe ashore, a broken bit of a man with his teeth set in an oar blade, when whole men drowned? Ye see the figure of the geisha girl on my wrist? Well, I have never much liked it, and it's full of *saki* I was when the old Jap put it upon me, in the days when I dwelt amidships in Her Majesty's frigate, the *Nelson*.

"So cut it off, but cut so ye'll save the initials above it. Maybe I'll also lose them when I get to a regular bone sawyer, but just for the moment we'll keep 'em. Man, 'twas a rare trick of a woman that sent me to a tattooer for a heart with those letters set in it! Since married, too. Not to me, of course, and may she be properly grateful for the blessings of God!

"Cut it off! What in —— are ye waiting for? Will the knife be sharper in an hour or so? Is this yer arm or mine ye're practising surgery on?

"Cut, I tell ye! Is yer liver as white as yer face? See first if the iron is hot, though. That is important, I take it."

Buronne lifted the poker from the little fire he had made on the hearth; it glowed dully red. Then his long fingers twined slowly about the hilt of the butcher knife. He made as if to relax them; Jamie's edged laughter and Jamie's flaying tongue bit into him again:

"So ye'd let me die of the gangrene, would ye? Ye vermin, ye offal, ye human refuse! Ye stinking black rat from a cesspool! 'Tis glad that I am ye're not Irish! Have ye no heart and no guts and no bowels? Are ye nothing but a long-blown pod of chills and fevers? By —— we breed men in Ulster!

"And another hitch on that tourniquet. Cast off, man, cast off! 'Fore ——, are ye dragging an anchor?"

Buronne twisted the thong even tighter, and lashed down the case knife he turned it with. His pale fingers groped for and found the butcher knife; his face was a death mask, a horror. Trembling, he set the sharp blade on the place Jamie had indicated. His tremors started blood; blackish blood from swollen veins.

Savagely he forced the knife to the bone, and passed it around the arm. Then Jamie laid the fore arm on the table, bracing himself against the wall.

"The saw —— ye, the saw! Ye quitter! Ye cur dog! 'Tis no wonder ye live as a

hermit! Ye should crawl like a snake on yer belly! Give way!"

Like a whipped puppy Buronne picked up the hack-saw.

The flow of blood had become a pulsing bright dribble, seeping slowly from tightly compressed arteries. High, shrill and wild was Jamie's laughter, ripping out through teeth set very tightly together; sounding like the filing of a saw.

The saw rasped once on the bone. Jamie gasped. Buronne staggered, retched convulsively, and all but fell. Jamie spoke softly:

"Love of ——, man, are ye so afraid that ye'll hurt me? What is a hand more or less to a Durrant born on Torr Head? Have ye not heard of the Bleeding Hand of Ulster? Get to work, big un, and I'll spin ye a story.

"—— ye, begin with yer sawing!"

Buronne picked up the hack-saw again; Jamie's voice was sweet and even as he continued:

"'Tis Milesian blood ye're spilling, Buronne, than which there has yet to be finer. From the continent they came into Ireland: from Ireland they conquered all Scotland—and he's a lying Scotch —— who says 'twas exactly the opposite. And for twenty centuries they ruled on the island of Ireland; warring among themselves for exercise. They were men, by the ——! —Buronne, Buronne, must I mind ye again of the sawing?"

And Buronne chuckled in the clattering, half human fashion that laughing gulls babble along the land-locked Florida bays. Rather more sound than mirth, and very little sanity. Yet afterward he could repeat Jamie's words syllable by syllable.

The saw grated in a very business-like manner, and Jamie's tender voice began, mouthing every word very distinctly:

"THERE was—a king—in—old Ulster. And the legend—says—he had twin sons—who were mixed—at their—bear-r-r-ing. It was never—known—which was the heir—to the kingdom—" he sighed softly—"of Ulster." Buronne laughed, harshly and violently, vigorously plying the dull saw.

"The twins—grew to manhood, which is—a ver-y common thing—with the Irish. And the king—came to be old and feeling feeble—which even the Irish—must come to. And he died—while the sons—were out of—the country.

"Dying—he decreed—that the first of the twins—to put hand on the soil of old Ulster—should rule as the legal monarch—Keep sawing, Buronne; keep on sawing.

"And a baron of the realm—went to bring them. And—and he put them aboard ship—and did not—did not say they must fight for a kingdom. Because in those days—men drew lots—with broad swords—and not—by a flip of—of a shilling.

"Light me—a pipe, will ye please, sir?"

Abruptly Buronne ceased the sawing and obeyed, holding the hot poker to the tobacco. With teeth sunk deeply into the cord wrapping on the clay stem, Jamie continued:

"Then they raised a headland of Ulster and came in as close as they dared to." He sighed deeply. "And then the baron—told them—and the three put off—in a small boat—with a sailor to do—the steering."

Jamie was whispering, now, but Buronne heard him plainly even above the burr of the saw, and the whistle of his own forceful breathing.

"The baron—put them astride of a thwart amidships, and himself sat back with—the sailor. There was a small sail. Each prince had a sword—and a shield. And if—one of them could get his leg—over the thwart—and jump forward—into the bow sheets—and could hold his—hold his position—he could be first to leap—leap shore on Ulster.

"The old baron—he gave them the word—and they flailed away at each other—with not even room—room to swing in. And it sounded—like a hammer and forge—in a smithy. And after a while—one of the princes—got forward. And they slashed and thrust—and had a dandy good time—and the prince who was abaft the other—prince—didn't have very good luck. Because—because the prince in the bow stayed there, and refused to be—killed or knocked—overboard.

"——!" The hand fell off on the floor.

Jamie laughed.

"The iron, man, the iron! Come, big un! Are ye— Please ——, but ye've let the iron get cold! Into the fire with it again!

"Use the pinchers, ye scum! 'Tis good Ulster blood that I'm losing! Now! Drag out the big un! Right-o, sailor! And the

string! Lash it well, Buronne; 'tis too rich a blood to be wasted! Talkative man, ain't ye?"

The hermit, staring at the poker and trembling like any gale-tossed palm, never opened his lips to answer.

Jamie, venting falsetto-pitched, rollicking laughter, went on:

"And when the princes were almost to the beach, the one amidships suddenly fell back to the thwart where they had begun the battle, and laid his left arm across it. I think he had let his shield drop off and overboard. The iron is hot, big man. I—"

"—— above, touch the little veins and arteries! I'll never feel it, I tell ye! No more than a stinging, at most. So the prince cut off his hand. Then he dropped his sword and picked up the hand and cast it over the breakers on to the beach, and thus became king of Ulster.

"There were men in the old days, Burronne— Love of ——, will ye faint when it's over and done with, and only the bandaging left?"

And Buronne, as he himself told it, did.

THE GRAY FOX

by Frank H. Huston

GEORGE CROOK, Major General U. S. Volunteers, sometimes known as "Two Stars" from the insignia of his rank—seldom worn, however—a private's blouse and pants and a long gray coat being his usual costume in the field; and it may be here stated he was in the field more often than at headquarters.

At West Point he was an enigma to his fellow cadets and to the instructors as well. Shy with women and strangers, stolid, separate and taciturn, these characteristics remained with him throughout his life.

In everything he was purely Indian himself, and it is conjectural whether he counted Indians among his ancestors, for his mind, manner of thought, speech and action, his physiognomy with the high cheek bones, configuration of the skull, as well as his endurance differed not a whit from those of the Indians. Perhaps in this lay his ability to deal with them and to achieve the success he did as the greatest Indian fighter of any and all time.

Alone, with only a gun and blanket, he would cross deserts where another white man probably would starve. Entirely self-reliant, he delighted in traveling and scouting alone by himself, his stealthiness and perspicacity winning him his sobriquet of the "Gray Fox" from many tribes.

Abstemious in diet, neither drinking nor smoking, ignorant of fear, stealthy as a cat, he would follow a trail all day. When night fell, he would halt, shelter himself in the sage brush, humped up like a veritable Indian in his single blanket, to arise before daybreak as refreshed as another would be from a bed of down.

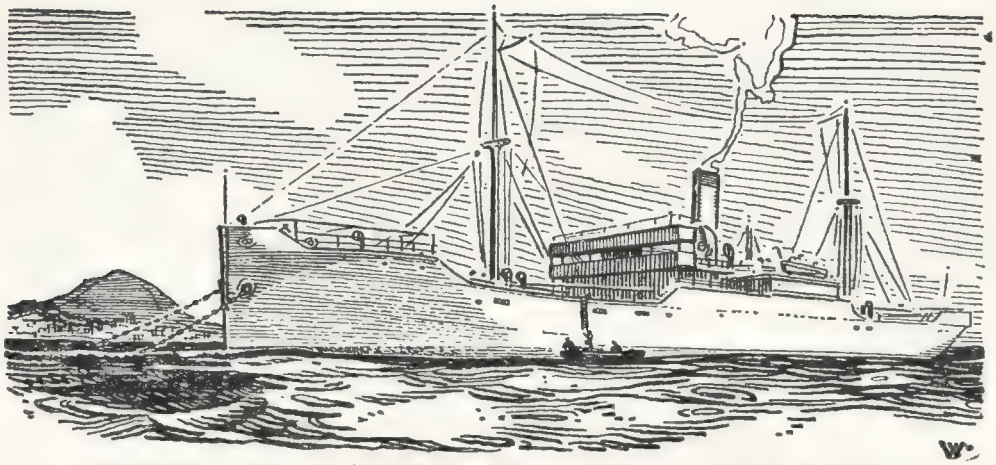
Leaving for Arizona to succeed Stoneman, he took only his orderly, a rifle, and *two clean shirts*, the latter, as he said, "to wear on the steamer, so as not to be conspicuous."

His tactics against Indians were directly opposite to theirs, as he would hide his command by day, moving by night.

When he assumed command of a department in Oregon, Mrs. Crook accompanied him into the wilderness, contented if she could be in his vicinity, share what others considered his hardships, and hold occasional speech with him in the rare intervals between his campaigns.

In handling Indians his tact and diplomacy were purely theirs; they understood him, his method being persuasion rather than force, but if fighting was needed, no one could fight harder nor longer than he.

But once, in the Black Cañon fight in Arizona, was he decisively defeated; nor is his reputation marred, as is that of some more spectacular figures, by having surprized and wiped out peaceful villages, later claiming great victories over hostiles. Though wary of promises, yet when his word once given, for good or bad, he carried it out. His word was law with the tribes, and although they would fight him at times, they never failed in admiration and respect to the "war chief" whom under any and all circumstances they trusted as their best friend, which he undoubtedly was; and strange to tell, even those afflicted with Indianphobia held him in like consideration.



THE PEARLS OF LA PAZ

A Complete Novelette By William P Barron

Author of "One Haitian Night," "The Tale of a Rooster," etc.

AS THE sun was going down behind the good city of Mazatlan, the *Maggie May* was feeling her way carefully into the shallow harbor. The fruit steamer was being assisted to her berth by three Mexican pilots, and these in their turn were receiving the verbal support of several personal friends.

Captain Daugherty and Jim Shannon, his mate, stood on the bridge, thoroughly enjoying themselves by expressing their unbiased and profane opinion of pilots in general and Mexican pilots in particular.

"Pilots air a lazy, bone-headed, stuck-up lot, Jim, all of 'em! I must say that this here evenin's performance beats all I ever seen. Think of it. Three boss pilots an' at least six helpers to bring a little dinky four-cylinder fruit steamer into port."

"There goes the anchor at last, sir," encouraged the mate, when he heard the chain rattling in the hawser-pipe as the crew let go the mud-hook. "We'll soon be rid of these birds now, unless they invite theirselves to supper."

"Not if I can help it," grunted the captain. "You go ahead, Jim, an' pay off that gang of pirates so they won't have no excuse fer hangin' around, an' shove 'em off fer shore. An' while you're talkin' to them I'll go build a fire under the cook so we can git supper an' go ashore ourselves. Maybe we can pick up an American or two to show us the town."

Half an hour later the captain and the mate shoved off for shore in the *Maggie May's* gasoline launch, a recent Christmas gift to the crew from the Fruit Company, and were soon landed on the only wharf Mazatlan possessed at that time.

After an interchange of international courtesies and cigars with the officers of the port, the mate, acting as interpreter, inquired for the nearest reputable cantina. They were introduced to the cantina by the obliging officers of the port, who took their liquor with the same gracious courtesy with which they performed their port duties.

"And now, señores," the mate requested after this function had been performed, "will you further oblige us by suggesting a hotel where we can get a real Mexican dinner, well-cooked? We are fed up on the regular tourist places. And," he added politely, "will you give us the pleasure of dining with us?"

The senior officer of the port was completely desolated because he had to refuse; but just at this time, unfortunately, his wife was possessed of an illness. Therefore it was necessary for him to hurry home.

"Otherwise, señores, a hotel would not be thought of for one moment. My humble house would be yours as long as you would honor me by remaining. But my fellow officer, señores," and he waved a fat but graceful hand toward the junior officer of

"The Pearls of La Paz," copyright, 1926, by William Barron.

the port, "he is a bachelor—or at least legally so—and not being encumbered with the cares of a family, he will be charmed to accept, I am sure, your so kind and hospitable invitation."

The junior officer of the port was duly "charmed"; and that was not all. He also expressed himself as being both able and willing to lead the two Americans to a hotel whose chef was well and favorably known up and down the West Coast. And he himself, was equally well and favorably known to all the waitresses.

"So, whenever you are ready to depart, señores—perhaps after another cocktail as an appetizer— Yes?"

The senior officer of the port, after personally requesting the Deity to accompany them during the evening, bade them goodnight and waddled away.

Full justice was done the dinner, and then the junior officer of the port suggested an adjournment to the hotel bar, from which was coming the excited hum of many voices with occasional loud laughter.

As they entered the bar, they saw, sitting on the farther end of the counter, a prepossessing, not unhandsome señorita. Coiled about her supple waist, with his broad, flat head resting on her shoulder, was a young boa-constrictor.

"Who else now?" she was asking the crowd that was grouped about her. "Who else will risk a peso with fortune?" She stroked the snake's head and shook her small silver-mounted tambourine persuasively. "Only one peso, and El Ojo here will tell me for thee, thy especially lucky or unlucky days; the days on which it is best for thee to buy or to sell; or to go upon a journey. Two pesos, and he will read the riddle of thy future. Five pesos, and he will whisper in my ear the name of the horse which will win the race tomorrow; or the lucky number for the National lottery. Ten pesos, and he will tell thee just where to dig for the gold buried during the time of the Conquistadores. Hasten, señores! I have yet other places to visit, and the evening is passing."

HER compelling eyes fell on a young *caballero*, one among a merry group of young blades, all of them in town from the neighboring *haciendas* for a week-end of sightseeing and a general good time. This youth was bravely arrayed in a purple velvet jacket over a snowy white shirt; tight trousers with a wide flare about the feet, and a profusion of silver buttons, the general millinery effect being topped off with a pearl gray felt sombrero adorned with filigreed silver.

Obeying the impulse of the señorita's eyes, he swaggered up and with the air of a nonchalant man of the world, tossed wo Mexican silver dollars into the tambourine, observing out of the tail of his eye as he did so, the effect on his fellows of his devil-may-care extravagance.

The señorita gave him a quick, appraising glance and made a dead reckoning. While he, his dark face flushed with embarrassment, was whispering his question in her ear, she was deciding how best she could entertain the crowd with this callow fledgling, who, no doubt, was never before so far removed from the fond zone of maternal jurisdiction. She nodded gravely while he whispered, and when he had finished she turned and took the snake's head gently in her two hands. Bending down, she put her mouth close to the side of his head, pretending to whisper in his ear, while she caressed his head and neck with her hands. In response, the snake began to sway his head slowly back and forth, shoving his ugly snout up against the señorita's ear and moving his jaws as if he too whispered. The señorita bent an attentive ear and nodded wisely. When the snake's head again sank to her shoulder, she turned to her painfully self-conscious and already embarrassed victim.

"El Ojo says," she began in a clear, loud voice purposely raised for the benefit of the bar-room crowd, "that the husband of the lady of thy heart is indisposed and goes not upon his journey until the third day from now. Therefore postpone thy visit for tonight, and return to thy mother."

The crowd responded instantly with loud laughter, cat-calls, whistles and shrieks of merriment, while the young scion of the *hacienda* tried in vain to make himself heard above the din.

At last the señorita, still smiling her sly, sweet smile, held her tambourine on high and shook it as a signal for the crowd to be quiet. They obeyed her instantly, anticipating more torments for the luckless young interrogator of fortune.

As soon as he could speak, after the noise

had subsided, he waved his hands wildly in the air and shouted:

"Señores, I swear by the Host, that I asked nothing concerning a woman! By the saints, no! I only asked—"

"Ah, but señor," cut in the clear, bell-like mocking voice of the señorita, who was thoroughly enjoying herself, "do the lips always ask the question that is in the heart? No! El Ojo here, he has the true wisdom of the serpent. He reads the heart and answers the question that the heart is asking, no matter what the lips say. Is it not so? For two pesos more, señor, I will sing for thee the song that this lady of thy heart is singing at this very moment, while she is sitting, sad and lonely, longing for thee."

The young *caballero* muttered a curse and flung himself toward the street door, only to be seized and forcibly restrained by his friends, who were hilariously enjoying themselves at his expense; while others shouted, "Sing, Señorita! Sing!" and showered coins into her tambourine.

Thus encouraged, the Señorita placed El Ojo in his wicker basket beside her on the bar and took the large guitar handed to her by her little quaintly dressed Mozo. She thrummed a few bars, tossed her dark head, and sang:

"My sick husband is lying in bed,
And I am sitting at the bed-side,
With my rosary clasped in my hand,
Praying God he'll soon be among the dead.
Oh! Dove! Oh Little Dove!
Fly! Fly to my love!
And say to him, Come, Oh come to me,
When he is dead. Quite really dead."

"That is the first verse and the chorus, señor. Shall I sing more?" she sweetly asked the tormented one. But he could bear no more. With a wild yell he wrenched himself free, avoided the eager hands of recapture and dashed through the door, closely pursued by his shouting tormentors.

The señorita commented on his departure with a shrug of her shoulders then, jumping lightly down from the bar, she beckoned her Mozo and prepared to depart. As she was transferring the coins in her tambourine to a small bag, she caught sight of the junior officer of the port and his two American companions, who had been interested spectators of her performance.

She smiled generously, stepped forward and bent her back in a sweeping curtsey, in which her high Spanish comb all but touched the floor.

"Señor," she greeted him joyously, "I am delighted. I am honored. Is it by any chance that thou art waiting to try thy fortune with El Ojo? Or is it thy friends who would test the wisdom of the serpent?" And she gave the two Americans an assured, appraising smile.

If the junior officer of the port was also overcome by joy at the meeting he concealed it remarkably well. One might have thought that he tried to convey to the expectant señorita his desire not to introduce her to the Americans, for he returned her elaborate curtsey with a curt bow.

"Not this evening, senorita, I beg," he apologized. "To-morrow, perhaps, we will try our luck with El Ojo. I go now to escort my American friends to their launch. The hour grows late and they desire to return to their ship." This time there was no mistake. He gave her a warning glance and moved toward the door.

But the señorita, in her efforts to become acquainted with the two Americans, either did not see the warning in the glance, or chose to disregard it. All men were fish who came to her net, and those who went down to the sea in ships yielded the best returns. Why should these two escape?

So when the junior officer of the port moved toward the door she, with ably feigned absent-mindedness, stepped directly in front of him smiling ingenuously.

"A ship, did you say, señor? An American ship? Came it in today? Oh, surely it was today, because yesterday there were no ships in the harbor. But this ship, señor, is it a ship of passengers?"

As she asked the question she placed a caressing but withal a compelling hand on the gold-braided sleeve of the junior officer of the port, and in her well trained dark eyes was a meaning all their own.

"Come, Don, my friend," she urged under her breath, "die standing."

Softly swearing to himself, the junior officer of the port surrendered. He bowed, smiled, and extended a hand to clasp the expectant one of the señorita, then turned to face the Americans.

"My friends, this is my very good friend, Señorita Seraphina Gonzales, known among us here in Mazatlan as the 'Señorita of the Serpent,' because over at least one of them

she exerts a strange and mystic power, as you have witnessed. She should also be named 'the Señorita of Hearts' because certainly she has all hearts at her feet," he added gallantly. "And these caballeros, señorita, are my much esteemed American friends, Captain Daugherty of the Steamer *Maggie May*, and his first officer, Señor Shannon."

The señorita, ignoring the fact that the junior officer of the port had introduced her with the air and manner of one whose back is to the wall, shook hands after the American fashion, gave each of her new acquaintances a bright smile and a come-hither glance of her expressive eyes.

"And this ship, señores, is she a ship of passengers?" she again inquired.

"No, señorita," answered the junior officer of the port, trying for the door again. "Rather is she a ship of fruits, coming to Mazatlan to buy cocoanuts from the island *hacienda* of the Rodriquez family, the Señora Bolas."

The señorita nodded brightly, but a slight shade of disappointment flitted over her animated face.

"And now, señorita," added the junior officer of the port, moving determinedly toward the door, "with your permission we will now depart to the launch of my American friends which awaits them at the wharf."

"What's he sayin' to the seenyreta, Jim?" inquired Captain Daugherty, holding back as the junior officer of the port was all but dragging him through the door by the arm.

"He's tellin' her that we ain't got no time to stay here an' have her tell our fortunes," the mate answered shortly, a little miffed himself at the strange behavior of the junior officer, who suddenly seemed so anxious for the two Americans to return to their ship.

"What does he know about us bein' in such a hurry?" challenged the captain belligerently, suddenly bracing himself firmly with his feet, just in time to prevent his egress through the street door. "You tell him we ain't in no hurry. We can stay here till sun-up if we want ter. McComb's doin' deck-officer till mornin' watch."

"Hey, señor!" protested the mate, assured by the captain's stand not to go home until morning. "We ain't in any hurry to return to the ship. In fact, we arranged before we left to remain on shore as long as we pleased. So don't expedite matters on our account. Not that we want our fortune told!" he concluded rather lamely as he noticed the professional gleam in the eye of the Señorita of the Serpent.

The junior officer made an almost imperceptible gesture of resigned disgust.

"Very well, señores," he agreed. "I but await your pleasure."

And he stepped back from the door, smiling with his lips, but with a malignant glance for the señorita, who was again advancing to the attack with an expansive exposure of gleaming teeth. She had ready an adroit suggestion that would have transferred the two Americans to her care for the rest of the evening, but the junior officer of the port caught her eye just in time. He frowned, made a slight movement of the head, and while seeming to brush away an adventurous fly, cleverly pointed to the street door.

The Señorita of the Serpent, with the celerity and precision of the trained soldier, stopped half way in her forward movement by changing her stride into the execution of a curtsey of farewell.

"Señores, I am doubly desolated, now that I learn that there is no urgent necessity for your return to the ship! I would desire above all things the pleasure of a long evening in your society, and to hear you tell about that so dear America, of which I know so little. But alas! I am this very hour due at the home of the commandant of the arsenal for supper, and also to entertain his guest, the Argentine consul and the general of the army with the feats of El Ojo and the reading of palms. Therefore, señores, I regret that it must be tomorrow when I will have the enjoyment to entertain you with my poor skill. Until then, señores, *adios*," and she was gone, leaving behind her a strong and haunting odor of Parisian perfume.

"What the heck did she say, Jim?" asked the captain, nudging the mate's elbow.

"She said she was sorry she couldn't stay an' have that there little grub-worm of hers tell us where we would be certain sure to find the gold old Cortez planted up the bay here a little ways. But she had a dinner date with General Pershing and the Prince of Wales," explained the mate, translating the voluble Spanish of the señorita into

the sarcastic English of his own skeptical thoughts.

"I didn't ask you for no such bull as that, Jim!" exclaimed the captain, irritated as he always was in Mexican ports, because he did not understand Spanish and had to depend on the mate, who did. "But you don't have to tell me if you don't want ter. I ain't goin' to lose no sleep over it."

"Well, Captain," explained the mate apologetically, "she did say something like that; just about as unreasonable. She said she was goin' to have dinner with the skipper of the arsenal and the Argentine consul, an' would have to tell our fortunes tomorrow. That woman stands just about as much chance of dining with them Mexican face-cards, as I have of bein' elected pope."

The junior officer of the port understood English sufficiently well to have explained to the mate, who was skeptical of the señorita's social standing that the señorita very likely was speaking the truth. This he could have substantiated by adding that as the señorita was a very accomplished liar, she maintained her batting average by making it a rule to always tell the absolute and simple truth, whenever possible; so as to have a reputation for truth and veracity to fall back on in times of dire need. But he contented himself with a faint supercilious smile behind his hand, and waited patiently for the Americans to conclude their conversation.

What was it to them that the señorita was a direct descendant of a grim old Conquistador, ousted from her *hacienda* by the Revolution, and now fallen on evil days, which necessitated living by her wits. Blood meant nothing to these American pigs. Besides, for reasons of his own, he didn't desire these particular porkers to know that he understood English. So he suggested affably:

"And now, señores, if you are not hurried in your return to your ship, will you allow me to suggest that I call a conveyance and you accompany me to a small club for a game of billiards?

THE two Americans hesitated and looked at each other furtively. Plainly the junior officer of the port was hospitably regarding them as his personal guests, whom he was obliged to entertain; while they desired nothing better than to be allowed to roam about the town alone, to go where they pleased, see things for themselves, and maybe to pick up the invariable American or two, during their tour of the town.

The captain looked at the mate, and by means of that peculiar, unexplainable but very tangible telepathy that usually exists between those closely associated for years on board ship, the two came to a mutual agreement without the use of words. And the mate answered politely:

"We thank you, señor, for your kind offer. But if it is all the same to you, we will return to our ship and get a good night's sleep. As you know, we have to begin loading cocoanuts early in the morning."

"But señor, you said—" the junior officer of the port began to protest, when the mate waved him down.

"Yes, I know what we said. You must disregard that, señor. We were only trying to be polite to the señorita. We didn't want her to think that she had to hurry away on our account."

After a little more polite urging from the junior officer of the port and an equally polite but firm refusal from the mate, the three men repaired to the wharf. Search was instituted for Big 'Un the giant negro fireman of the *Maggie May*, who was also chauffeur of the launch. After separating Big 'Un from a highly profitable crap game, which he was conducting with some colored Jamaican stevedores, and a final courteous farewell from the junior officer of the port, the launch began to sputter the swift way across the moonlit bay towards the *Maggie May*.

"Just go out a little ways, Big 'Un," ordered the captain, "and then turn her back in shore. We are goin' ashore again, as soon as that Mexican Alphonse an' Gaston has gone home."

In half an hour the mystified but happy Big 'Un was back again in the crap game, and the captain and mate were discovering the Main Plaza of Mazatlan. At that hour of the evening the Main Plaza was the center of the city's activity, due to the Mexican custom of utilizing the Main Plazas of towns for a sort of marriage market. There was a band-stand at the center of the Plaza, surrounded by palms and long fronded ferns, with little walks radiating from it, leading to sequestered seats in tiny nooks among the park plants. And in

and about this delectable spot, all the eligible señoritas of Mazatlan who were physically able were strolling round and round the little park. Alone? The saints forbid! Invariably they were accompanied by Papa, Mamma or a lynx-eyed duenna of ample parts, to protect them from the blasé young gallants of the town, who stood just outside the milling circle of potential yoke-mates, ogling them as they passed in review.

Captain Daugherty and the mate sought out a retired seat among the ferns, where they could observe the promenade of the young Eves without attracting attention.

Mazatlan has a fairly up-to-date light plant, but the moon considers it her duty to assist on every possible occasion, and that night she was doing most of the work. The bay was a glittering silver sheen, the far away hills a golden glory, while in the little park she cast velvety shadows with the palms and ferns filtering down long, tawny rays through the leaves. Somewhere near at hand a fountain rippled and gurgled in its play.

Both men were solid, middle-aged married men of affairs with modest, slowly growing bank accounts and comfortable sea berths. But first of all they were sailors, and a sailor's heart never grows old. It is his one gift from the fairies. So when the band delighted them with "La Golendrina," beautifully rendered and made more sweetly sad by the great golden moon, the whispering of the palm leaves in the gently blowing, never ceasing Gulf breeze, their matter-of-factness melted in the warm heart's glow of romance.

Vague, bitter sweet longings awakened by the music welled up in their breasts; and as "La Golendrina" finally died away in a last sad tremolo of sound, both men sighed heavily, looked at the trim, dark-haired, white frocked señoritas floating by, and secretly wished that some obliging devil, with the same poor business judgment as the one who turned back the clock of time for Faust, would happen along and make them a reasonable offer. But none came. In real life they never do; and the mate, who never strayed from practical things for long, had opened his mouth to suggest a visit to a cantina across the way, whose very modern electric sign had already attracted him.

Just at this moment a man and woman came up the path and sat down opposite them, behind a group of ferns. As they seated themselves, the woman said in Spanish:

"And the two Americans of the sea? What became of them, my good friend?"

"Pish!" came an impatient irritated voice, "their sporting blood is of the poorest. Practical, hardworking early-to-bed Yankees, both of them. After you left us they returned almost at once to their ship and are now wasting this wonderful night in sleep. They had in their minds only the one idea, that tomorrow they must begin loading their ship with cocoanuts from the island out yonder in the bay."

The mate rose slowly and carefully, making no noise, slightly parted the ferns and looked out to confirm his suspicions. It was the junior officer of the port and the señorita of the affectionate boa-constrictor.

The mate motioned for the captain to have a look, as the señorita inquired wistfully:

"Is there not on this ship of fruits a place for passengers? Can you not use your official power to secure for me a passage on this boat? Time passes and—" She threw out her arms in a passionate gesture of disgust. "I weary of this place, Don. I weary of it. Why did you hurry me away from the cantina? Why did you not let me try my luck with the Americans? But no! You urged me away as if I had the plague. Or—" and she laughed, "as if you thought I might eat the men alive, without cooking. If you had allowed me time to talk, perhaps I could have found a way to persuade them to take me on the ship. Do you not realize that every day is dangerous? That one more day of delay may mean—"

With a hissing curse, the junior officer of the port clapped his hand over her mouth and grabbed her throat with the other.

"Cease thy chatter, wanton!" he growled. "Who knows. They might be sitting among these ferns, there to overhear us. It is thy accursed tongue that— Come—" he ended abruptly, rising and gallantly offering his arm to the woman that just a moment before he had almost choked into insensibility.

"Let us promenade upon the beach. We may talk there without fear."

"They must have figured on makin' a big financial haul out of us some way, from the way they was talkin'," concluded the mate,

after he had interpreted the conversation to the captain. "A blackmailing scheme of some sort, maybe. I thought that there mustached, oily-headed bird was actin' kinder embarrassed like down in that hotel, while that lady snake-charmer was packin' up her snake to go somewheres else. He was as restless as a terrapin in hot ashes. I wonder what they wanted out of us anyway! Or still want, for that matter, because they ain't got nothin' yet. Let's follow 'em down to the beach an' see what they are up to."

But the romance of the night had a firmer grip on the captain's soul than it had on the mate's.

"That's it, Jim," he complained testily. "That's always the way with you! You are so dinged suspicious an' distrustin' you take all the joy out of life. From what I can gather, all that seenyretta wants is a cabin passage to Galveston. Anyhow, no matter what they wanted, they ain't got nothin', not even a dollar to have our fortunes told. An' they can't steal the *Maggie May* outen the bay, that's plain. Let's set here an' smoke a cigar and be ca'm an' listen to the band awhile. There ain't no use to git all het up over them two crooks, if they air crooks. It's nice and quiet here, an' there don't seem to be no mosquitoes."

And he turned to the parading señoritas

THE mate grunted the protest that he knew would be futile if put into words and was just leaning forward to light a cigar, when a shrill, blood-curdling shriek shuddered through the air, followed by the blast of a policeman's whistle. There was a wild scramble along the gravel path and a young peon passed them going like the wind, leaped among the ferns and disappeared. In his wake, very far in his wake, to be exact, came a pursuing policeman at an obese trot.

When opposite the Americans he paused panting for breath, gazing futilely in the general direction taken by the young peon. And then, goaded to action by another shriek followed by sympathetic "Ayes" and "Ohs" with a voluble out-pouring of soft cadenced Spanish in female voices, in the direction from which he came, he blew his whistle again. This was answered faintly from the direction of the cathedral. Ripping out a particularly satisfying Spanish oath, he drew a deep breath, preparatory to resuming the chase, when he saw the two Americans. He immediately utilized this excuse to linger.

"Ah! señores! Did you observe that vile purse-snatcher who just this moment fled past here? The obscene pig! But why," he wailed, "will women persist in carrying their valuables about in a flimsy mass of beads, strung on their arms? In the old days they left them well concealed at home, or in their stockings or bosoms. But now—! What would you? These fashionable beaded bags are a constant temptation to thieves."

"You are right, señor," the mate sympathized. "Did this thief secure a lady's bag?"

"That he did, señor! The bag of Señora Camelita Comez, a widow, señor." He lowered his voice, "A widow blessed with three lovely daughters, an ample fortune and—the most fiendish temper and abusive tongue between here and the City of Mexico! In this bag that was stolen—I know the señora well, señor—there was perhaps only a few centavos; at the most two pesos in silver, a small bottle of scents, powder and rouge for the face, a bottle of strong salts for the nostrils if she should become faint, and nothing else. And yet the police of Mazatlan will be daily brought to task about this theft for ten years to come," he concluded gloomily. Then his face brightened with a hopeful thought. "Unless God calls her," he reflected piously in a tone of voice that showed how the prospect of the señora's early demise gratified and pleased him.

"These petty thieves," he continued garrulously, "they are all young peons, señores; and it is with regret that I say it, for I see that you are gring—Americans. They go to your country to work for higher wages than they can receive here; and they return to us, not good workmen, señores, but expert thieves and rogues, educated in crime; quick at the get-away; able to disguise themselves; utterly without respect for the law; ready with a waggling finger beside the nose for the *alcalde;* an obscene gesture of the thumbs for us; a sacrilegious boo even for the priest himself. It is impossible to restrain and regulate them by ordinary means. They should be stood against the wall. It is all the fault of the United States." A piercing police whistle interrupted him.

"Pardon, señores! I must hasten! That whistle is a summons from my compadre on the beat beyond the cathedral. Perhaps, by the blessings of God, he, being a lean man of excellent wind, has caught the thief. I go! I may have the pleasure of restoring the señora to her purse."

"Well," the mate philosophized, after he had translated the park policeman's remarks for the captain's benefit, "I suppose, after that, we had orter stand up with our hands on our hearts, sing 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and then go take a drink on ourselves for the honor of our country. To have a cop acknowledge that another city, much less a foreign country, has his own home town takin' the count on crime, is goin' some. It's positively overwhelming! Next thing we know the cap'n of a British freighter will happen along and acknowledge our right to sea room! Come on, let's go take a drink."

As they rose from their seats, the mate stooped and picked up from the path in front of him a small, curiously shaped shell.

"Look at this shell, Cap'n," he said, turning it over curiously in his hand and observing the swastika carved on it.

"I'll bet that gallopin' purse-snatcher dropped this out of his pocket when he dived into them ferns. I'll bet it was his luck-piece; what do you think?"

The mate received no reply, because the captain was already out of ear-shot, steering a straight course for the cantina's attractive sign. So he put the odd shaped shell in his pocket and followed the captain's example.

In the cantina they found the several Americans who are to be found somewhere in any Mexican seaport. So the evening, which in the beginning had promised to be very tame, ended in one of those "It's always fair weather when good fellows get together" seances that are engendered by champagne and its allied beverages. Consequently, the morning star, the forerunner of the dawn, was glowing in the eastern sky before the party broke up.

All the Americans vociferously insisted on seeing Captain Daugherty and the mate safely on board their launch before they themselves went home. After grave discussions of ways and means, they decided that it would be safer for belated traffic or early market wagons, as well as for themselves, if they marched to the wharf four abreast down the middle of the street; and as an additional precautionary measure, to sing at the top of their lungs "Auld Lang Syne."

The wisdom of this plan was quickly demonstrated. The sound of twelve pairs of healthy, freely functioning lungs rendering "Auld Lang Syne," in the quiet hush of the hour just before the dawn carries far—sufficiently far to prevent the owners of the lungs from being run down by any right habited vehicle—unless it be in justifiable retaliation for murdering music. And the dogs of Mazatlan, even the old asthmatic ones, also rushed to their aid by barking and howling as joyously and persistently as the far-famed dogs of Constantinople.

In this manner, these representatives of America made their bibulous and uncertain way along the street in perfect safety to the wharf. Having accomplished this feat, each one of them commented on it favorably to the other and to the world in general. The proud inventor of the plan then girded up his loins and consecutively grasping the arm of each separate member of the party explained at great length, with a slavish devotion to detail, how he came to think of this highly efficient solution of Mazatlan's traffic problem; and he solemnly committed himself to its introduction in the States when he returned home. Then he waked up the wharf watchman, fortified him with a hearty drink of aguardiente, and explained in bad Spanish his wonderful discovery to him. Afterward they boarded the launch; disturbed the slumbers of Big 'Un, who was resting from his labor of lightening the wallets of the Jamaican stevedores; and at last after many affectionate and in several instances, tearful farewells on the part of their fellow Americans, Captain Daugherty and the mate shoved off for the *Maggie May*.

It seemed to the captain only a few minutes after he had succeeded in anchoring himself firmly in his bunk, when he was aroused from sound slumber by the asthmatic exhaust of a laboring tug, towing a barge of cocoanuts into position for loading. The tug was being ably assisted by the profane advice of the mate, whose temper had not been improved by his shore spree so recently ended.

The captain fervently returning thanks that he was no longer a mate, turned over for a blissful snooze. But it was not to be! There was a knock at the door, and the mate

stuck in a head that had every appearance of staggering under a headache of excessive tonnage.

"Cap'n," he explained, "I hated to wake you up, but Rogers, the American manager of that there cocoanut farm, come over on the barge, and he wants me and you to go back with him to have a look at the plantation and dinner with him afterward. I tried my best to stall him off, but didn't have no luck. I don't feel like goin' anywhere myself, an' don't suppose you do—and as for eatin' a dinner! I couldn't go a hummin' bird's liver. But we've just got to go with this bird an' stall through somehow. I can't put him off. You ain't got no bromo-seltzer, have you?"

The captain groaned and pointed a weak, nerveless finger toward the medicine chest.

"Fix me a big stiff dose too, Jim," he pleaded, "an' tell Joe to git me a cup of strong coffee down here right away, if he wants to live long. I'll git dressed as soon as I can, an' we'll go if we have ter. But I wish I hadn't met up with them dingbusted booze-fightin' Americans last night. It's them that throwed us."

"So do I," agreed the mate fervently. "But what else could we do? We couldn't insult them by refusin' to be sociable; and to refuse them last few drinks would have been a insult to the flag—wouldn't it? You know, every distinct time they said, 'Here's lookin' at Old Glory.' We couldn't turn down Old Glory, could we?"

"I should say not!" the captain attested sympathetically, drinking his foaming glass of bromo-seltzer with a retching protest in his throat. "I'll be right up as soon as Joe brings the coffee."

And the two men parted with their mutual self-respect restored by the peculiar psychology of the self-justifying philosophy of the morning after.

The manager of the cocoanut *hacienda* was forward talking to the mate, when the captain made his appearance.

"I am Rogers," he introduced himself, "late of Tampico, and later yet from Texas, where the stork left me some forty-six years ago. I came over on the barge to induce Mr. Shannon and yourself to go over to the island with me and see it at first hand; how we manufacture cocoanuts for the American trade. You must have dinner with me, and if you care to stay, I can put you up for the night, or a month or two, for that matter. It will be a pleasant change for you. No one else there—white folks, I mean—but myself. My boss is two old maids who live in Spain, and evidently expect to die there, as they never leave their home town."

The captain accepted the invitation, and went down to the engine-room to arrange with McDonald, the *Maggie May's* engineer, to keep an eye on the Mexican barge boss and the loading crew. Then with Big 'Un manning the launch, they shoved off for the Island.

They spent the day going over the *hacienda*, getting acquainted with cocoanut culture; the fresh air and exercise gradually restoring Captain Daugherty and the mate to their normal spirits. The tour finally terminated at the Hacienda House, where Rogers announced:

"Let's go in now and eat a real Mexican dinner; then we'll go out back, in a courtyard where I have rigged up a sort of miniature fiesta for you. Try these cocktails, boys. They'll sort of jog your appetites along. Well, here's to Old Glory! Long may she wave!"

The captain and the mate looked at each other apologetically—but it was through the bottom of their glasses.

"Now then," Rogers informed them after dinner, when they had repaired to the rear *patio* with their cigars. "The first thing on the program is a real Coney Island fortune-teller stunt. Only I think it is a little different from any you have ever seen before. This lady fortune-teller, who rejoices in the name of Señorita Seraphina Marie de la Concepcion Purisima Gonzales, does her stunt with a pet snake, a young boa-constrictor about twenty feet long. You'll be surprised."

The captain and the mate again exchanged looks, but said nothing. Undoubtedly it was the fortune-teller of the cantina, but they would not spoil Rogers' pleasure in thinking that he had arranged a surprize for them.

THE señorita entered the *patio*, followed by the little Mozo, who came tugging El Ojo in the same wicker basket. And they were to be surprized after all; for while the Señorita of the Serpent was undoubtedly the same person physically, she was otherwise an entirely different personality. She bore

herself with the majestic mien and regal pride of an Infanta of Old Spain. This was accentuated by the high Spanish comb over which was draped a mantilla of the cobwebby lace of Seville, the long-skirted black silk dress with its wide flare, the black silk stockings of Spanish lace, the black satin slippers.

Gravely, with dignified grace, she courtesied, then seated herself. If she remembered ever having seen any one of the three men before this good hour, she gave no sign of recognition. She lifted El Ojo from his basket to her lap, and began at once with gentle dignity, to tell the fortunes of the *hacienda* manager and his guests. Gone was the ribald charlatanism of the cantina, and no imp of malicious mischief danced in her dark eyes. Instead, here was a mild well mannered lady, almost of the old school, who gravely promised only good fortune in the future to those present, and made several shrewd guesses as to their past. Evidently the Señorita of the Serpent regarded fortune-telling as a diversion for the rabble and not for the delectation of *hacienda* lords, for as soon as she could with courtesy return El Ojo to his basket, she did so.

"Bring me my guitar, Pedro," she commanded, and when he had brought it she sang for them "Tragedia de Heraclio," a Mexican folk-song of the West Coast, a sweetly sad haunting melody when sung by the Señorita of the Serpent.

After the song she rose and again swept them the courtesy of Old Spain, that alluring gesture of gentility that permits a modest flash of well turned ankles, the soft rustling melody of silken skirts and the general grace of movement that declares the thoroughbred.

"I will now say *adios, señores*," she announced, "giving way for the more interesting part of the evening's entertainment."

"Not so, señorita," declared Rogers, rising to his feet and bowing, "I beg of you, will you not dance for us your Dance of the Machete, as you promised? These friends of mine are Americans, just from the States, and have never seen the dance. It is for that especially that I have invited them."

She looked at him dubiously, turning her fan about in her hand.

"You can not find it in your heart to refuse me, señorita," Rogers pleaded. "These Americans—"

The señorita's doubtful frown cleared from her brow at this, as if the word "Americans" had been the deciding factor, rather than the good round sum of gold which Rogers had already paid her to dance this very dance for which he was now so earnestly pretending to plead. Having indulged herself in this little by-play peculiar to Mexican femininity to her full satisfaction, she again swept the three men her alluring courtesy.

"Ah! those dear Americans! How I love them!" she proclaimed. "And especially yourself, Señor Rogers," she added. But the coquettish flash of her dark eyes was for Captain Daugherty and the mate. "It will be a delight indeed to dance for thee, and for these thy American friends. I go now to prepare myself for the dance."

"Curious folks, these Mexicans," Rogers observed as the señorita vanished with a swish of skirts, "especially Mexican women folks. Now the señorita knew as well as pie all along that she was going to dance that Machete Dance. Came over to the Island for that purpose, in fact. But to hear that put on talk of hers, you would think the idea just struck her. Now wouldn't you? But here she is," he concluded, "all set for the party."

For the señorita had returned with a bevy of native girls and two male guitarists to assist her; while little Pedro brought up the rear with two vicious-looking machetes in his arms.

THE previous behavior of the Señorita of the Serpent had been coldly dignified, tinctured with that to-the-manner-born air of an aristocrat fallen on evil days. Now she had become the *soldadera* personified—a woman of the camps, of open spaces and desert lands, a she-wolf of the *tierradentrol* —interior—a thing of blood and fire. Gone was the piled up ebony hair with the high comb; gone, the long-skirted silk dress, the lace stockings, the slim boudoir slippers. Instead was the field uniform of the *soldadera* "dressed light" for marching. Her thick hair held in a homely knot beneath a red mantilla bound about her head; a man's rough flannel shirt, a ragged short skirt of army khaki, a vermilion sash about her slim

waist, her legs bare, with the leather sandals of the peon woman on her feet.

The girls grouped themselves about her in a circle, with castanets in each hand. The two guitarists, sitting cross-legged just outside the circle, struck a few preludial notes on their great guitars.

Beckoning to the waiting Pedro, the Señorita of the Serpent seized the two machetes, one in each hand. The castanets clashed, the notes leapt simultaneously from the two guitars, the señorita swayed her body in rhythmic unison and the dance began.

In perfect accord the señorita twisted and twirled the malignant machetes with the rhythmic clashing of the castanets and the thrumming of the guitars. Now they clashed close to her throat—then with a slithering swish they were behind her head, only to leap to her waist to whirl in a glittering circle. Up and down—round about, anywhere, everywhere, in converging gyrations about her swaying figure and dancing feet, darted the flashing blades.

And while she danced, the peon girls sang La Cucaracha—the cockroach—which is the marching song of the Mexican rebels, and the desert-bandit's source of inspiration.

As the sweet, high-pitched voices blended harmoniously with the music of the dance, the moon climbed up the sky above the young cocoanut palms along the eastern wall of the *patio*, flooding the courtyard with mellow golden light.

Obeying the impulse for romantic setting, Rogers extinguished the *patio* lights and the dance went on to its completion in a befitting weirdness of moonlight only.

When the dance was finished, the Señorita of the Serpent came forward smiling, radiant with the pride of performance.

"And now, señores," she said, "I will be pleased to smoke a cigaret."

"You deserve one, I am sure, señorita," Rogers agreed.

The mate offered her his cigaret case, which he had just opened, and reached in his pocket for a match. Then came out in his hand with the matches the little curiously-carved shell, dropped in the park by the fleeing purse-snatcher the night before. As he struck a match for the señorita's cigaret, the mate put the shell on the small smoking-stand beside his chair.

The señorita, cigaret in mouth, bent forward gracefully to meet the match. As she did so, she noticed the little shell. With a sharp intake of breath she stopped and stared at it, unmindful of the lighted match and her cigaret—stared until the match burned the mate's fingers and he dropped it with an exclamation. Apologizing for his awkwardness, he lighted another. When the match flared up this time in the semi-darkness of the moonlit *patio*, the señorita favored the mate with a swift, inquiring, calculating glance through narrowed lids, while she lighted her cigaret.

"Thank you, señor," she said softly, "I am completely desolated if thy fingers were burned because of my awkward slowness." Then more softly, almost inaudibly, as the match went out leaving them in semi-darkness again, "Señor, on the stand there," and she touched the little shell quickly, withdrawing her hand as if she feared the movement would be noticed, "is thy lucky piece—perhaps? Put it again in thy pocket," she admonished. "Is it not a—precious possession? Thy charm against misfortune?—Yes? Thou didst forget it, perhaps?"

All this hurriedly, in an inquiring whisper. And then she paused, as if expecting an answer.

"So I did, señorita," the mate agreed, putting the little shell in his pocket. "Thank you! You have good eyes! Maybe," he continued, "you can tell me what kind of a charm this shell is supposed to be. I know there must be some meaning to it. I know something about—"

"Sh—! Sh—!" she hissed warningly. "Do not attempt a test here! I am content. I do not doubt you, *compadre*. There is no need to make yourself better known!" And after breathing these mysterious, cryptic words in his ear she rose and left him.

The mate, wondering and amazed, watched her join the others, turning her words over in his mind. What did she mean? Or was his Spanish at fault? He put his hand in his pocket and turned the little shell over and over reflectively, but he could not arrive at any solution of the enigma. Finally with a shrug of his shoulders he dismissed the subject with:

"It was just a lot of bull, that's all! Fortune-tellers is always tryin' to act mysterious an' talkin' a lot of lingo nobody can understand," and he rose to say good-night to the Señorita of the Serpent as she gave them a last graceful courtesy.

"She didn't mean nothin'," he concluded finally and ungrammatically while preparing for bed in one of the guest chambers of the Hacienda House, which looked out on the silvery sheen of the moonlit sea.

Perhaps the mate would suddenly have changed that slow working practical mind of his if he had been blessed with the Magic Mirror and Shell of the old Eastern soothsayers—and aided by the mirror could have looked into the bedroom of the junior officer of the port an hour later; and by means of the talismanic shell, heard the words of the Señorita of the Serpent, who was impatiently trying to make the dull-witted junior officer of the port understand what her nimble mind had already comprehended.

"I tell you, Don, he is one of us, beyond the peradventure of a doubt! Not only had he our symbol, which he displayed very skillfully for me to see, pretending that it was only by accident. But when I let him understand that I had seen it, and used in speaking to him one word—but one word, you comprehend, he was so eager to make himself known to me and so careless of the others, that he stuttered out more than half of the reply to the code of introduction. I had to stop him quickly or he would have betrayed us. I say to you he is the gringo of the sea of whom we have heard so much; the one who was formerly at Tampico in charge of the Immigration Office. Without any doubt it is he! So then prepare at once a car that I may go at dawn to La Paz for the pearls. This ship of fruits is without doubt the one arranged for me to take to Galveston." She gave the half-asleep junior officer of the port a vigorous shake. "Up, sluggard! Prepare thyself! Thou mayest sleep again at siesta time. I must go at dawn and should not be long away. This ship of fruits must not sail without me!"

But as the mate did not possess those ancient instruments of utility, he slept peacefully on in the Hacienda House, mingling his snores with those of the captain in the adjoining room.

TWO days later the *Maggie May*, following the usual custom of Mexican ports, announced her determination to depart by four long toots of her whistle. These were courteously acknowledged by her sister ships in the harbor, as well as by all able-bodied steam whistles on shore. Having made her bow to the conventions, she picked her way carefully out to sea, dropped her three Mexican pilots and turned her nose toward home.

The captain had just rung for full speed ahead, and she had begun to "feel her oats" as the long swell of the Pacific caught and lifted her, when a launch darted out from a small island near by and made for the *Maggie May*. They came along side as near as they dared and whistled frantically, rang their bell energetically and added to these noises by lusty shouts and a woman's shrill scream.

The captain vigorously rang the engines down, rushed out of the wheel house to the side and bellowed through his megaphone:

"Launch, ahoy! What the ——'s the matter with you? Look out or we'll swamp you! This is the *Maggie May*— United Fruit Company— Bound for Galveston— Clearing Mazatlan—"

"We know who you are," the launch bellowed in their turn, in Spanish. "We want to board you for a conference. Throw us a ladder."

"What the —— is he sayin', Jim," the all but frantic captain asked the mate, who had hurried up from below to ascertain the trouble.

"I had hoped an' prayed that I had heard the last of that greaser gibberish for a week or two."

"He says he wants to come aboard for a talk," the mate translated freely. "And," he added as he leaned over the side for a look, "one of 'em 's got on a navy uniform with enough gold braid to sink a small-sized launch."

"Oh, he does, does he?" sneered the captain. "Well, he certainly selected a wonderful place for a private conversation! Out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean! If he didn't have on that uniform, I'd tell him to go to ——, and tell it to the Marines; but I guess we had better let him come aboard an' ease his mind. I've got ten dollars to bet that it's one of them howdy-do-and-fare-you-well port officers that wants to add five dollars more duty on them cocoanuts. Throw the ladder down an' tell him to make it snappy. We want to get home in time for Christmas."

With this encouragement the launch came nearer, finally made fast, and a gorgeously caparisoned captain of the Mexican

navy came aboard. This sea-going lounge-lizard strode forward, halted, clicked his heels together, clapped his hand to his full-rigged chapeau and saluted, long and earnestly.

"Señores, I salute you!" he exclaimed dramatically. "And in saluting you, I salute also your great and glorious country! May your country and mine never dissolve the bonds of friendship."

Captain Daugherty and the mate looked at each other in astonishment. Had they been boarded by a Mexican admiral deep in his cups? Or were they the victims of a practical joke by the prankish Americans of Mazatlan?

The mate however, wasted no time in speculations but returned the salute as well as he was able.

"Cap'n—er—er—Admiral—" he stuttered in confusion, not being able to interpret the insignia of rank decorating the uniform of the visitor, "we thank you for your kind congratulations, both for our country and for ourselves. And may we now inquire the reason for your visit? As you no doubt know, merchant vessels have time limits between ports of clearance, and if we are delayed we must make long detailed explanations to our company. Therefore—"

"Ah to be sure, señores! To be sure! Business is business, as well says your great Washington, was it not? I will hasten, therefore to the point. I have boarded you to request a favor, a very great favor. In my launch below I have the sister of myself, and her duenna, who are very desirous of taking ship with you to Galveston, to visit relatives in the interior of Texas, and—"

"Impossible, señor!" interrupted the mate, shortly. "We have no cabin accommodations for ladies. We are not chartered to carry passengers; and besides, these passengers could not be landed in Texas without passports."

"Ah! my dear señor! All that I anticipate! All that I have arrange! Behold!" And he dived into his pockets. "Here are passports for the two! I have failed not, señor, to overlook anything!" And he illustrated his remarks with a comprehensive wave of both arms. "You will not deny me the favor, señor, I beg. My sister is most anxious to visit our relatives in Texas. Mayhap she can return with you when you come again. An' then, señor— Ah then our house shall be yours! We will make you very welcome! We—"

"What is all this hellacious row about, Jim?" interrupted the captain irritably, having restrained his curiosity as long as he could. "More duty? Or maybe ten days' quarantine because the cabin boy is cutting a wisdom tooth? I thought we was gettin' cleared too easy."

"Worse than all of them, sir," answered the mate. "He wants us to take two women to Galveston. We ain't no Ward Line passenger boat, an' I told him so. But he wouldn't take no for an answer an' you can see he is still wavin' his arms about. But I'll tell him plainer this time, that we ain't—"

"An' just when, Mr. Shannon, may I ask, have you been authorized to say sich a thing to anybody?" asked the captain with his best "at-the-mast" manner. If there was anything he hated worse than he did Spanish, it was the slightest encroachment upon his authority. "Now you go ahead and translate just exactly what this here—this here—lord high admiral wants us to do. That is, if he can't talk United States. An' then when I find out just what's wanted—then, I, who happen to still be captain of this here boat, will tell him what's what, an' not the mate."

While this deck debate was going on, the *Maggie May's* boilers were screaming a high pressure protest; and McDonald the chief engineer was not repeating the Twenty-third Psalm, while he was climbing the engine-room ladder to the deck.

"Douse half your burners; slow up the blower, and put on your injectors," he shouted to Big 'Un. "I'm goin' up on deck and find out why in the seven dashes and twelve asterisks the Old Man ordered full steam ahead as we thought for several days' steady goin', and then just as we got them bilers worked up to a high pressure job, ring us down all of a sudden without even phoning why! He must be off his nut!"

The sympathetic Big 'Un was an outlet for McDonald's outraged feelings just as the wisely provided safety valves relieved the insulted boilers. But the insulted and misunderstood mate had no recourse, although his blood pressure was gauged as high as the steam in the boilers. He had to content himself with a dusky red face, an angry gulp or two and a mental reservation of

profanity, that if unleashed would have rivaled a high explosive shell.

This done, he began to translate calmly in a low husky voice, tremulous with rage, the exact request of the gold-braided visitor. And while he translated, McDonald stuck his head above deck from the engine-room ladder, and interrupted him by asking the captain why the engineer had been called upon to risk a boiler explosion by stopping his engines just as he had got all set for home.

The captain was searching his soul for a suitably profane and sarcastic reply when he was struck dumb by the appearance of a plump but lissome lady coming up the ladder from the launch, followed immediately by a stout, not so lissome lady in the customary uniform of the conventional duenna. In her stout arms she bore a large wicker basket and a food hamper. Behind the duenna came a Mozo, staggering under the weight of a steamer trunk and a suitcase.

The mate was the first to recover from this surprizing move.

"Look!" he said to the captain. "They ain't waiting for your answer. They have already moved in on us."

Before the bewildered captain could speak, the gold-braided carrier pressed into his nerveless fingers the small package containing the passports.

"Thank you, señor," he said hurriedly. "Mexico, in the person of myself, acknowledges a debt of eternal gratitude. *Adios!* Go with God!"

With a quick, light kiss on both the cheeks of the astonished captain, he was gone nimbly down the ladder and into the launch. The launch's engine bell clanged; their rope was cast off; water churned busily astern, and she was under way.

In the meantime, the mate was slowly, very slowly translating what the Mexican naval officer had said just before he kissed the captain good-by.

"But— But— Why in the —— didn't you stop him, Jim? You knowed just what he was sayin. You had orter stopped him afore he got under way. I didn't even know what was goin' on, it all happened so quick. Now here we are with these women on our hands!"

This was the mate's inning.

"Of course I knowed what he was sayin'," he answered sweetly. "But it ain't been five minutes since I was told pint blank to lay off the captain's stuff! An' believe me, I'm layin' off! I was translatin' just as fast as I could. I ain't no Spanish phonygraph. An' while I was doin' it, that Mexican admiral, or whatever he is, had done kissed you good-by an' gone."

Here Bill and Joe, two of the crew who had edged as close as they dared to the group, snickered openly.

"This is one time sure and certain," continued the mate, "that you can't blame me for what has happened. I was doin' just exactly what you had ordered me to do, an' it ain't my fault you have these here women on your hands. That launch is about two miles away now, an' still a-goin'. An' there's McDonald with his head stickin' up from the engine-room, sayin' his bilers is under an awful strain, standin' still here under a full head of steam. Now, shall I start up, sir? Or what shall I do?"

The mate had never seen a personal enemy burned at the stake; nor had he ever scalped a foe, but he was getting the same brand of satisfaction out of the captain's embarrassing predicament. And, adding to his enjoyment, was the thought that no matter how much the captain desired to follow his time-honored custom of blaming the mate for all unfortunate happenings, he could not follow that precedent in this instance. What had happened had happened under captain's orders. So in the discreet silence of his soul, the mate was giving the captain what is technically known as "the horse laugh."

THE captain did not reply at once to the mate's question. He couldn't! The emotions, many and varied, that were surging within, choked him and prevented speech. After all, what was there to say? He cast a frenzied eye toward the far away launch, fast disappearing in the direction of the little island from which it had darted out to intercept the unwary *Maggie May*. Then with a slight inward shudder the captain forced his reluctant eyes to focus themselves astern. There, still standing, was the broad, well nourished duenna, clasping to her ample bosom the wicker basket. To the leeward of the duenna was the *pièce de resistance*, a stately, exquisitely gowned young woman, who, as she lifted her slim brown hands and unwound the veil that had

protected her face from the tanning effect of the sun and wind, revealed the prepossessing countenance of the Señorita of the Serpent. Seeing recognition on the captain's face, she smiled, displaying a battery of large and perfect teeth. The duenna following in the wake of her mistress, smiled also and courtesied elaborately.

Or rather she began to courtesy; for just then the *Maggie May*, still rolling idly, and with the man at the wheel gazing open-mouthed at what the launch had brought aboard, took a heavy wave broadside on and pitched heavily. The duenna sat down in the midst of her courtsey with a dull *thud*. The señorita teetered gracefully, screamed prettily and started toward the captain in a sort of running stagger. Reaching him, she clutched his arm and shrieked in broken English:

"Save me, *El Capitan!* Save me. The ship goes over!"

There was distinct tittering from the crew, who were safely out of sight in the rear; and the captain thought he had detected a snicker from the mate.

"Jim," he said, an ominous thickness in his voice. "Air you as dumb as you look? Or have you been struck by lightning? Step in the wheel-house and jerk that telltale full steam ahead. An' tell that idyut in there at the wheel to get to —— outer there an' go help the cook peel potatoes, if he can't keep her head in the sea any better than that. Then reset her on her course an' git things goin'."

Under the administrations of the mate, the *Maggie May* promptly righted herself and got under way. Not so, the captain's wits! He still stood glowering, and scratching his head, trying to find the answer to his problem.

But the señorita's faculties were functioning. It was a habit they had. Taking advantage of the now level deck, she ran back to her baggage and opened the large food-hamper—without which, amply stocked, no Mexican family would dare travel ten miles from home—and diving into this she took out a large thermos bottle, with drinking cup attached. Returning with this to the captain, she steadied herself against him in case of another uncertain sea, unscrewed the cup and poured out a generous portion. This she offered with a smile, well knowing that a good drink speaks a universal language and relying on its good fellowship to redeem her lack of English.

A gentle aroma as of spices was wafted to the captain's nostrils. He didn't know it, but his nose was becoming acquainted with that aguardiente cocktail known in some parts of Mexico as El Calorifero Corazon—El Calorifero, for short, literally translated—a warmer of the heart—or a heart-heater. It can be made properly only by those born and reared among the purple hills that ripen the muscadines composing part of the cocktail; as in like manner, a mint julep loses its taste and efficiency when built by alien hands. For these reasons the list of ingredients or method of preparation of this water of joy need not concern us, but only its effects on Captain Daugherty.

The captain took reluctantly the cup forced into his hand, sniffed at the contents, took a sip. The sip was followed by a mouthful which he turned zestfully about in his mouth and swallowed slowly with a long, lingering prolongation of pleasure. There was only one more swallow in the cup. The captain hastened to take it, but postponed its final exit down his throat as long as possible. And even after the gratefully cool drink was gone, there remained an afterglow, a fragrant coolness from some aromatic herbaceous ingredient of the cocktail, that was a bibulous delight.

As if by magic, the captain's irritation was gone. A gentle, soothing wave of happiness swept softly over him, to be immediately followed by a dapper, reckless, devil-may-care mood that bade dull care begone. He drew a long breath of sheer enjoyment of the last lingering effects of the cocktail in his mouth. Then he pretended not to notice that the firmly held cup in his hand had been refilled, being pleasantly surprized when a gentle nudge of his elbow by the Señorita of the Serpent, called his attention to it.

It is contended by the partisans of this justly celebrated cocktail that after three well proportioned drinks a man is irresistibly impelled to seek out his bitterest personal enemy and kiss him on both cheeks. Certainly the two thermos bottle cupfuls enabled the captain to clearly see his way to accept the passengers that had been thrust upon him. He could not spare the time to put back to Mazatlan. Nor could he waste it standing by until his launch

could put them ashore. Therefore he would make the best of it, and would divide the passenger money among the crew, after reserving a prorated ration fund. He and the mate had separate watches, anyway, so they could double up in one cabin, leaving the other for the women. In this way he could work it all out very agreeably.

With a gesture to the señorita to remain where she was, the captain walked over to the wheel-house.

"Jim," he called to the mate, "come here!"

When the mate had complied he took him by the arm and steered him toward the Señorita of the Serpent.

"Jim," he explained, "I want you to try a drink the seenyreeta had in her thermos bottle. Jim," he repeated solemnly, "it is the all-firedest drink I ever tried a snort of, barrin' none! It makes you feel like a steam-heated angel. Try it! That's all I ask! Try it!"

The mate tried it, graciously assisted by the señorita. He tried it the second time, in which the captain joined him.

"Now ain't that the finest drink you ever had?" the captain asked. "Ain't it? Did you ever taste anything that could hold a candle to it? Did jer—" The captain gestured eloquently as he futilely searched his soul for appropriately descriptive adjectives.

"Well, it's kinder fair to middlin'," the mate admitted grudgingly. "But—"

"Jim," the captain interrupted with scorn in his eye, "you beat all I have ever seen. Why, your disposition— Honest! If a female angel wus ter fly down outer heaven an' 'light on this deck an' hand you a cupful of the water from the River of Life, you'd take it an' drink it off, an' wipe your mouth with the back of your hand, an' then if she asked you—mind you, I say if she asked you, otherwise you wouldn't say nothin'—but if she asked you how you liked it, you might say, 'Fair to middlin'.'"

Now the mate was one of those unfortunate individuals who are not always cheered by the cup that is supposed to cheer as well as inebriate, but are thrown thereby into dense gloom; so he didn't even grin in response to the captain's extravagant raillery.

"That's neither here nor there," he grunted. "What I want to know is where are we goin' to put these here women? We ain't got no passenger cabins."

"Why, Jim," bantered the captain playfully. "Where's your hospitality? Surely we can take care of 'em some way. Me and you can double up in my cabin, or one of us can bunk in the chart-room on a shake-down."

"All right," the mate conceded, "me for the chart-room then. But admitting that we can sleep an' feed 'em, how about passing 'em through quarantine at Galveston? Suppose one of 'em should get small-pox or somethin'? How would them cocoanuts stand a hot hold for ten days or two or three weeks? An' besides that—"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," the captain interrupted piously, if a little airily. "That's what the Good Book says, Jim, an' we'll abide by it. Now you tell the seenyreeta to come on down in the cabin. We'll find some place for her and her maid. I'll tell Joe to drag them trunks an' things down in the cabin, so they can git to their clothes. Come on now, Jim," the captain urged as the mate still glowered toward the duenna. "Be a sport an' let's get these women folks fixed up comfortable. We've got 'em on hand till we get to Galveston, so we might as well make the best of it."

The marvelous cocktail continued to have an optimistic and buoyant effect on the captain's spirits until they got the Señorita of the Serpent and her duenna comfortably established in the mate's cabin. Its engendered good nature even lasted during supper, although the captain's amiability was subjected to a severe strain while conversing with his guests through the medium of the mate's Spanish.

Finally the mate excused himself and went on deck to arrange the night watch. Perhaps somewhat cannier than usual from the effects of the magic cocktail, he hunted up McDonald the engineer and suggested:

"Mac, I've got a hunch me an' you had better take the deck between us tonight an' let the old man get a full night's sleep. His biler is foaming a little from some sort of new-fangled drink that Mexican woman brought with her in a thermos bottle. An' when he gits to sleep, he'll sleep mighty sound. So I figure we had better let him sleep right on and get his sleep out. Then to-morrow he'll feel fit an' fine. But if he don't get his sleep out he'll have a twenty horse-power grouch on to-morrow.

So they agreed not to disturb the captain's rest, but allow him to enjoy in peace the delectable dreams conjured up by the "heater of the heart."

THE mate, who had the last watch just before day, was leaning over the rail after a turn at the wheel, watching the greenish gold phosphorescence of the sea as it rushed astern—a pastime of the lonely night-watch which has a peculiar soothing mesmeric effect. While thus engaged, the mate was startled by a light touch on his arm and a fragrant whisper in his ear.

"Do not turn about, *compadre meo*. We may be observed. I have but a moment. It is I, Seraphina. It was wise, very wise," the señorita continued in a confidential whisper, "to make thyself known to me by so slyly showing thy shell. Oh! Aye, very wise! But for that I might have missed thee entirely this trip, and have been yet longer delayed. Because Pedro, who was to have made me known to thee in the Cathedral Plaza as was planned, at the last moment failed us. Within the hour that he was to come for thee, he became involved in some cantina brawl over a woman, or in some way secured the attention of the police and fled. He had to flee, because his capture in Mazatlan, where he is known, would have been fatal to all of us. Now I go, before it is light. With better favor, I will talk longer another time. *Adios, compadre!*"

The mate looked around cautiously just in time to see a dark mantilla-draped head disappear down the cabin companionway. He drew a deep breath, scratched his head and, putting his hand in his pocket, touched the little swastika carved shell. In what strange company had its unwitting possession drawn him! So it was the recreant Pedro fleeing from the police, who had dropped this token of Mexican crookdom, evidently possessed by those belonging to a secret organization of some sort. It was also apparent that the Señorita of the Serpent was a member in good standing of this society of the little shell. And what was more startling, she very plainly considered him one of the elect also! What was to be done about it? And what would be the outcome? Why had she been so anxious to go to Galveston?

These questions required thought; and an early morning cup of coffee, which his nostrils told him the cook was preparing, was conducive to thought. So he went to the galley where he found Big 'Un also coffee hunting.

"Big 'Un," said the mate, "I wish you'd go down and wake Joe, so he can take the wheel while Bill eats breakfast. Then you'd better take the Old Man his tray right away. By the time he drinks his coffee and gets dressed, it will be time to change the watch."

However, it was not necessary to wake Joe. He was already up, busily engaged in teaching the cook's two white rats, George and Lucy, to jump through a small hoop.

"Look, Big 'Un!" Joe cried when he saw the colored fireman. "Lucy has learned to jump right smart. Look at her! Jump, Lucy," he commanded, waving the small wire hoop in front of the rat's nose. And Lucy jumped.

"But George, he ain't no good. He's as big a dumbbell as the cook. All he can do is eat!"

"Lissen boy," Big 'Un admonished after he had witnessed Lucy's performance. "You lay off dem rats, and git yourself up on deck. De mate wants you to spell Bill at de wheel, whilst he eats his breakfast."

The two went on deck, leaving the rats uncaged, as they had the run of the forecastle and even fraternized with Long Tom, the ship's cat.

Joe went to the wheel-house, while Big 'Un with the captain's coffee tray balanced on his great broad hand went below. A thousand times he had performed this service for the captain and nothing had ever happened out of the ordinary. As a matter of fact, he had learned that the coffee hour was a very propitious one; the best time possible to approach the captain for small loans and other favors; because a well brewed cup of coffee with a stick of rum in it usually produced a very receptive and generous mood in the captain.

So, thinking no evil, Big 'Un humming a little tune to himself, opened the cabin door and set the coffee tray on the little table beside the captain's bunk. Then he reached out his hand toward the captain's shoulder, intending to gently shake him awake. But he didn't. His hand was arrested midway, and his heart did a handspring, when a hiss—a malevolent, sinister, sibilance of a sound—came from the foot of the bunk.

A startled glance in that direction revealed the great flat head of a snake slightly swaying and, partly erect, rising above the bed clothes. As Big 'Un, partly paralyzed and wholly scared, continued to stare with the inanition of astonished terror, the snake opened his mouth wide enough it seemed to Big 'Un to swallow him without undue exertion, and hissed again.

In that moment Big 'Un was as near to death as he will ever be until the Booker T. Washington Lodge Number 45, Colored Knights of Pythias of Galveston, Texas, place his knightly body in the tomb. However, just at this time there was a movement on the part of the snake that evidenced his intention of approaching nearer, and this caused the natural law of self-preservation to yank Big 'Un back from beyond the grave. Returning life and awakened consciousness also enabled Big 'Un to let out a yell that even woke the cataleptic slumberers in the forecastle, who were often referred to by the sarcastic mate as the ones who would give the Angel Gabriel a tough half hour on the morning of the Resurrection.

Big 'Un cleared the passageway with a mighty leap. One equally as efficient brought him to the companionway; another, and he was on deck. It was fully five minutes before Big 'Un could regain his voice, not to mention his composure, and explain to the assembled crew, headed by the mate, just what had happened. When he was finally able to tell his fabulous story of the mighty serpent, it was received with derisive jeers by the crew. And the mate, who for the nonce had forgotten the reptilian playmate of the Señorita of the Serpent, said:

"Big 'Un, for tall and fancy lyin' you certainly take the cake! You orter have a license! How do you expect us to believe that a snake as long as a lifeboat and with a mouth big enough to swaller an anchor could be sleepin' peacefully with the cap'n? A snake as big as that would just ca'mly swaller the Old Man an' take the whole bunk, instead of just part of the bed!"

These remarks by the mate were a cue for the crew and Big 'Un became the butt for a lot of ribald joking.

"All right, white folks," he conceded, realizing that his big snake story had failed to register. "Have it your own way. May be dat snake warn't dere. I ain't goin' to argify 'bout it. But if dat snake wasn't lyin' dere all coiled up, an' den riz up an' hissed at me same as a leaky safety-valve, why den I is—I is—a cock-eyed looney, dat's all! Jus' a plain Little Joe Dumbbell. Dat snake skeered me so bad hit's de Lawd's mercy I didn't drap dead. But here I is an—"

Big 'Un was interrupted by the sight of the captain fully dressed gradually emerging from the companionway. Big 'Un's jaw dropped and he stared at the captain incredulously, as if he had fully expected to see the snake come up the companionway with the captain inside of him. When told the snake story the captain was as mystified and skeptical as the rest.

"Of course there ain't no snake in my bunk, an' never has been. Big 'Un is the champion fear hunter an' ghost finder of the world. I have heard of men finding snakes in their boots but this is the first time I ever knew 'em to be found aboard ship, roostin' in the captain's cabin. You must be nutty, Big 'Un, or think I am, if you imagine I could sleep all night with a snake as big as you say this one was an' not know it. Now you men scatter out an' git to work. Cookie, don't forget we have visitors for breakfast."

Of course the captain was mistaken, and like the mate he too had forgotten that his guest was the Señorita of the Serpent, the owner of a boa-constrictor with a college education. Big 'Un's yell had awakened him; it would have even aroused a wharf watchman, but the captain didn't hear the dull flop of El Ojo's fall to the floor; nor did he turn over in time to see him glide swiftly from the cabin into the passageway in the wake of the fleeing Big 'Un.

That there was a snake of large and generous proportions on board the *Maggie May*, George and Lucy, the cook's white rats could have informed the world just about this time, if they could have spared the time from their urgent efforts to avoid being swallowed alive and whole.

FROM the passage El Ojo had found his way to the forecastle. Here he discovered George and Lucy peacefully nibbling the bread-crumbs Joe had left on the table for them. And just a fraction of a second after El Ojo had sighted George and Lucy, the rats had also obtained an eyeful of this ancient enemy of rodents.

"Oh! Ay!" exclaimed El Ojo to himself.

"Here are two fat rats that the Mozo has thoughtfully provided for my breakfast. And I am hungry, too, at that. These rats are of an unusual color; not the kind I am accustomed to finding in cantinas. But as this cantina is different from the others, no doubt the rats are also. We will see. Anyway they are alive and I prefer my meat fresh, even if it is necessary to pursue it, as seems very probable in this case."

His conclusions demonstrated sound judgment, for while El Ojo was slowly gliding toward the table, cogitating over his breakfast plans, George and Lucy were cowering on the top of it, trying to make up their panic-stricken minds what to do; whether to passively submit to being eaten without resistance, or to put up a game but certainly an unsuccessful fight for their lives, or to risk a wild, reckless jump over their hereditary enemy, and flee.

It was certainly risky, flight was, but if once the deck could be gained—then perhaps the galley and a safe refuge in the capacious pockets of the cook. They looked about them fearfully, their little red eyes glowing with the agony of terror, every hair in their whiskers quivering with apprehension, their hearts beating wildly, their bodies tremulous with fright.

In this great emergency of life and death George departed from that heroic axiom of the sea: Women and children first. With a chattering squeak of desperate fear, without a glance at his mate, he leaped. It was a mighty flying leap up and away over the swaying head and darting tongue of El Ojo, well out into the passageway and toward the ladder that led upward to the deck. Lucy promptly followed her lord with equally as good a leap, leaving El Ojo alone and still hungry.

El Ojo did not burst into disappointed tears and wails of unavailing regret. He merely about-shiped and went in pursuit of the two white streaks of fear that had vanished up the ladder. But he was too late. Just exactly twenty seconds before El Ojo had got under way, George had precipitated himself into the galley and still squeaking hysterically made a leap for the dish rack. He missed by a hair breadth becoming one of the ingredients of the noon slum which was bubbling on the stove but he gained his objective. From the dish rack he jumped to the cook's back and in another moment had reached the refuge of his jacket pocket. Here he lay panting and trembling. Two seconds after this Lucy was occupying the opposite pocket of the jacket and El Ojo was climbing the ladder in pursuit.

He did the stair rather awkwardly, as it was strange to him, stopping to sway his head from side to side and to thrust out an inquisitive tongue occasionally to map out his way.

THE cook was so taken by surprize by this successful home run of his pets that he wiped his hands on the dish towel, and after a frantic struggle, succeeded in dragging the palpitating George and Lucy out of his pockets.

"Gosh er mighty, George!" he exclaimed, "what ails you an' Lucy? You are that skeered a body would think ye had seen the same ghost Big 'Un did! I'll bet that —— Joe has been burnin' your tails again with matches. Let's see!"

But a careful inspection of tails revealed no indication of scorching. If the cook had then glanced out of the galley door, he would have confirmed what Big 'Un had already told him, and what the rats were doing their best also to inform him; because El Ojo's head was just appearing above the deck from the forecastle ladder. But he didn't look.

"Well, anyhow," he concluded philosophically returning his pets to the welcome refuge of his pockets, "something or other has skeered —— out of ye. Anybody kin see that with half an eye. So—"

The cook was interrupted by the weird war-cry of Long Tom, the ship's cat, so named by Joe, whose literary hero at the time Long Tom was acquired was Long Tom Coffin of Fenimore Cooper's "Pilot."

Just before El Ojo had emerged from the companionway Long Tom had stretched himself out luxuriously on top of the chicken-coop at the side of the galley for a morning nap. He had just succeeded in disposing, by the gastronomic route, of one of the large wharf rats whose residence in the hold was a constant professional reproach to him. But long sentry duty at one hole, from which Tom knew the rat must finally venture forth, had had its reward. Tom was therefore at peace with the world and had just settled himself for his slumberous sun bath when he heard a faint scratching

rustling sound on the deck beneath him. Tom rolled over and looked down; and saw what Big 'Un had seen in the captain's cabin.

Unfortunately for El Ojo, Long Tom had not inherited an instinctive fear of snakes from his ancestors, either recent or remote, as had Big 'Un and George and Lucy. To him a snake was not a thing of dread. The flat-headed, snub-nosed eighteen feet of steel muscle bound up in a scaly hide, gliding below him on the deck, eagerly darting its head here and there in search of George and Lucy, was only some sort of disturbing factor and must therefore be instantly disposed of. It was merely some sort of strange moving thing that didn't belong on the *Maggie May;* Tom was very sure of that, and with the intense conservatism of cats, Tom didn't intend to allow any innovations, if he could prevent it. So he arose softly to his feet, elevated his hind quarters, switched his tail a time or two, as he peered over the edge of the chicken-coop, gauging the distance. Then he crouched and sprang on the gliding intruder, at the same time giving the vicious, snarling war-cry of his clan.

Long Tom had aimed for the snake's head, but being heavy with food or miscalculating the distance, he fell short about half a foot when he landed. Otherwise El Ojo would have died when he was young and in his prime. Long Tom had landed with all his saber-curved claws cleared for action, and he sunk them deep in the back of the scaly interloper.

It was the old tiger method of attack, a flare back to his jungle ancestry, that Tom had used; the tactics which generations of the various cat families had found to be the most effective, because it is the most terrifying and disconcerting.

Long Tom rode El Ojo until he made a sort of flying leap for the mast, caught at a rigging-pin, clung, and then began to climb. Tom then unsheathed his claws, jumped to the deck, discharged a final spitting growl at his fast climbing foe, and walked back to the chicken-coop with his tail at the angle of victory and waving in the air, saying quite plainly by his nonchalant air that what might happen above the deck was no concern of his.

This had all happened before the perfectly amazed cook could give voice to a yell that rivaled the one with which Big 'Un had challenged the world earlier in the day.

"Jumpin' Jehosaphat. Come here, everybody. That *wuz* a snake Big 'Un seen! Look at him. He's a histin' himself up the mast. But Old Tom wasn't skeered of him, you bet. He just run him up the mast. Come and shoot him, somebody, afore he bites us all."

And having discharged his duty to the crew as he saw it, the cook dived into the galley and slammed and bolted the door. It would have been difficult to determine which were shaking and shivering the worst—the cook himself, or George and Lucy in his pockets.

Fortunately for El Ojo, the Señorita of the Serpent was also an early riser. Alarmed by the cook's frantic yells she ran up on deck and was just in time to prevent Joe from shooting at her pet with a shotgun from the gun-rack in the chart-room. She was then able to explain to all of the crowd, through Slim the Portugee, that El Ojo was her pet and perfectly harmless to human beings—could not bite viciously if he so desired.

"He has the best of natures, my friends, and is really loving and kind in his way. Be pleased to step inside the house of the cook until I coax him down. He fears you men and will not descend so long as he sees you."

"Well, he tried his best to ketch my two pet rats," declared the cook after he had been induced to open the galley door "and he chased Big 'Un clean up on deck out of the captain's cabin. Of course he might have just wanted to kiss 'em, but that don't look like a loving disposition to me."

"Rats? Yes certainly, El Ojo will chase rats," explained the señorita, "and would soon rid the ship of them, if he had his way. But not people. No! Come El Ojo, little Dove. Come. Descend to Mamma!"

After Long Tom had been carried into the galley and things seemed reasonably safe, El Ojo did descend and was restored to his basket.

"Well!" exclaimed the captain, who, with the mate had been below decks in the engine-room and had arrived on the scene just as El Ojo was being returned to his basket, "Big 'Un was right after all! We'll have to apologize to him, boys, for kiddin' him like we did. I plumb forgot about seeing the Seenyreeta with this snake before, an' I never seen it when she come on board. Let's go below now an' eat breakfast, if the cook ain't too nervous to bring it down."

"How fortunate for us," whispered the señorita to the mate as they followed the captain, "that El Ojo was not injured, and that he was not able to catch and devour the rats. He must be in the best of health and hungry when we reach port— He is our dependence; otherwise the pearls—" And she gave the mate's arm a little pinch, sailed ahead of him into the mess-room and seated herself beside the captain, leaving the mate more perplexed than ever.

What was it all about anyway? Who was he supposed to be, and how had the little curiously wrought shell dropped by the fleeing Pedro enabled the señorita to recognize him, and accept him as "our gringo *compadre*."

"Search me!" muttered the mate to the coffee pot, while he sat listening to the señorita's guileful attempt to teach the captain Spanish. "I guess I had orter talk the whole thing over with the Old Man. But just as like as not he'd pooh-pooh the whole thing because he did not think of it first. Or he might spill the beans to the señorita if he believed what I told him, an' that would mean a knife between my ribs maybe the next time we made a Mexican port. Anyway, I'll let it all ride a day or so longer. And now if you'll excuse me," he said aloud to the captain, "if you'll excuse me I'll turn in for a spell and get some sleep."

And with a bow to the señorita and a regret in Spanish that the urgent need for sleep deprived him of her society, the mate sought his bunk.

For an hour after the mate had gone, the señorita and the captain lingered at the table, deep in the study of languages. The señorita would select some object from the table and hold it up—the captain giving its English name and the señorita repeating the equivalent in Spanish. Then she would prettily pronounce the English name, managing to look altogether charming as she did so.

To the captain it was a very diverting game, even if he didn't acquire as much Spanish as the señorita did English. It would have been more interesting perhaps, if the captain had known that the señorita was a very fair linguist and spoke English perhaps better than the captain himself, allowing for grammar and discounting her pronunciation. But she wisely decided that what the captain did not know would not hurt him; so she allowed him the pleasure of thinking that she was laboriously acquiring a smattering of English under his able tutelage. And while she was pretending to learn English, she was really applying herself to the study and understanding of the captain himself; his personality and peculiarities. This acquired knowledge she was storing up in her capable little head against the day of need, as is the habit of the fortune-tellers' tribe the world over. And she continued to use these tactics throughout the voyage, whenever occasion offered.

The thought-harried mate avoided both the señorita and the captain, spending all his spare time alone, trying to decide whether he should go to the captain, tell the little that he really did know and all that he suspected, and then between them work out the best course to pursue, when they reached port.

Galveston was only twenty-four hours away, and the Señorita of the Serpent much nearer to the captain's good graces, before a conversation with the captain finally decided him. The mate had just come on deck to relieve the captain at the early morning watch. The captain paused on the steps of the cabin companionway and retraced his steps.

"Jim," he said, lowering his voice so as to defeat the ear-straining efforts of the man at the wheel, "the seenyreeta wants us to use our good offices and influence to git her through quarantine and the customs as soon as we get in. And she sort of suggested to me that if you would take the launch as soon as we dropped our hook and would rush them health officers out to us, an' then take her an' steer her through the customs—you knowin' Spanish an' all—an' then get her passports visa-ed fer her, she would appreciate it an' won't fergit the favor, she says, but will entertain us somethin' royal the next time we make Mazatlan. She has got a hunch that after she visits her kin-folks she will be able to connect up with some vaudeville circuit or other working out of Galveston or Houston, an' make a pile of money with that fortune-tellin' snake of hers. That's why she wants to get on shore and get started as soon as possible."

"How come she could tell you all this without me to translate?" asked the mate suspiciously. "You can't talk Spanish and I didn't think she could talk English to do any good."

"Oh yes she can," exclaimed the captain

proudly. "I learned her. She can talk United States right along since I took her in hand. An' as for Spanish, I'm learnin' that from her purty fast too. You see, we swap languages."

"I see," said the mate dryly, mentally adding a new angle to his problem. "I've been laying by several days to ask you a question. An' something to tell you too, I guess cap'n. Do you think that woman is honest an' straight?"

"Just as straight as a die, Jim! An' as honest as a lookin'-glass. Why?"

"Well, suppose I told you—just suppose mind—that she was a smuggler an' all round crook. What would you think of that?"

The captain was provoked by the mate's manner, but he restrained himself by exclaiming:

"Jim, you certainly beat my time! What do you get out of life, anyway? Always suspectin' and suspicionin'; doubtin' an' distrustin'! Honest, I wouldn't have your disposition for—"

"But she told me with her own mouth that—"

The captain interrupted with a laugh, an irritating patronizing laugh that engendered thoughts of justifiable homicide in the mate's breast.

"Oh, yes! I guess she led you on to think that she has got a half a ton of opium in a false bottom of her trunk—or that she has a million dollars' worth of diamonds sewed up in her clothes or packed in her shoe heels. She's a great jollier, that woman is; I found that out myself. She wouldn't have to say much to you to make you suspicious. If you seen one of the twelve apostles wearin' an overcoat that looked like yours, you'd have him arrested fer grand larceny."

"It ain't diamonds that she's got; it's pearls," contended the mate stubbornly, still ignoring the invidious reference to his personality, "and if you will give me a chance to talk sense maybe I can prove it to you. She said—"

"But let me suppose once!" interrupted the captain. "You've been supposin' and suspectin' for half an hour to no purpose as far as I kin see. Now supposin' you can't prove these here things? Then what happens? I'll tell you. First off, we'll queer ourselves for good and all with those Mazatlan folks; that's certain and sure! You know just as well as I do that them Mexicans is as clannish as Hard-Shell Baptists; and when they git the news how we tried to queer the seenyreeta, our name will be mud in box-car letters at that port, as far as any favors go. You seen for yourself how she stands with them officers of the port. They think she is just about a half a ton of all right. Ain't I tellin' it straight?

"And she ain't nobody's fool neither, if you ask me. An' if you try to put somethin' over on her, have her arrested or somethin' an' can't back up these here suspicions an' supposin's of yours, what will she do? Why, just as soon as she lands, she will hot-foot it to the Mexican consul an' have a fit in his office an' tell him all about the dirt you done her. An' he'll write the Fruit Company an' maybe the Mexican ambassador at Washington. An' the Fruit Company will write us an' ask how in —— we got a passenger in the first place, an' what do we think we are, an' so forth, an' to kindly explain on the back of this letter, an' so on, an' so on, for about three months of letter writin'.

"Why, man, we wouldn't have any peace for at least six months. So Jim, you just let the seenyreeta be—an' keep your supposin's and suspectin's to yourself. Just let her be—diamonds an' pearls, an' rubies an' all—opium an' cocaine an' Scotch an' rum, or Tom and Jerry if she has got any. It ain't none of our funeral. Let them Custom House fellers do the worryin'."

"But you said," persisted the mate rather faintly, "you said we was to help her through the customs! Don't that mix us up in it, if they find the goods on her?"

"It don't if we don't know nothin' about it, an' can prove it," stated the captain. "As it is, I don't know a blamed thing! An' that ain't all! I ain't goin' to let anybody, not even you, tell me anything! An' I ain't goin' to try to find anything out for myself. Let it ride! As far as I know, she's a good woman, makin' an honest livin' tellin' fortunes with a boa-constrictor snake to help her. Let the poor woman alone! Live and let live is my motto!" And with this parting shot, he went below.

"All right, you pig-headed old hooker," mumbled the mate, glaring down the companionway after his superior officer. "You just go on livin' an' let livin'! Dinged old hypocrite! Talkin' like one of them Sailors' Snug Harbor Sunday night sermons on the radio. Him pretendin' to be so pious an'

unsuspectin'," continued the mate, addressing his remarks to Long Tom, who was sympathetically rubbing against his legs. "An' me knowin' he can cuss two hours hand-runnin' an' never stutter, back-fire nor repeat hisself. An' he ain't never suspicious! Oh, no! Not him! He's as open-minded an' liberal as a pawn-broker, an' has got as much confidence in his feller man as a wild turkey.

"But just because this here fortune-tellin' Jane has read his hand for him, an' told him he's goin' to live to be a hundred and come in for big money when he gits married the second time, he believes all she says an' swallers her bait whole, hook an' sinker. He has done forgot that that white streak acrost his hand, what she calls the life-line, or good-luck line or somethin' like that, wasn't born there! That's a scar he got splicin' a rope when he was a boy afore the mast. He told me so hisself. But that woman has bulled him into believin' it means a million dollars or somethin'.

"Now as the Lord is my helper," concluded the mate glaring out to sea as he filled his pipe, "from here on out, the Old Man can sail his own canoe, an' I'll sail mine, in this here funny business. If that woman ain't a crook, she's goin' to have to prove it; or she is goin' to land in jail when we git to Galveston, if she don't git me tangled up in some scheme of hers I ain't seen through yet."

BUT in spite of the mate's strong soliloquizing, that night still found him puzzled over the situation and undecided how to act. Was he taking too much for granted and pursuing a wrong course after all? Did the señorita really have the pearls she hinted at possessing? Or was it her vivid and fertile imagination? Could the captain be right? Was the señorita merely hoaxing him? Could it be after all, that she was merely a harmless gipsy fortune-teller type of woman who loves to imagine herself in the rôle of a great adventuress?

The mate sighed despairingly and shook his head. It was a problem requiring some knowledge of woman in general and female fortune-tellers in particular. It was not a puzzle for a man to solve whose acquaintance with the sex consisted of a few days of family life during shore leave between voyages.

While the mate was thus cogitating, a perfumed zephyr was wafted up the cabin companionway followed by the señorita herself, who came out on deck in as glorious a mood as the sun's which had just risen above the horizon of tumbling waves, transforming the lingering flocks of gulf clouds into a golden fleece.

She favored the mate with a flash of her well kept but somewhat oversized, longish teeth and held out a subtly caressing hand.

"The captain tells me, *compadre*, that thy city of Galveston is not far away, and that sometime tomorrow, or at the longest, the next morning, we will have arrived. Is it not so?"

The mate acknowledged that it was. She came nearer, lowering her voice.

"Is it not time then for you and me to agree upon some plan?"

"Well, you see, the captain thought that —I—I have persuaded him to—to allow me to— Well, as soon as we sight quarantine, I'll shove off in the launch and bring the health officers on board. Then just as soon as they pass you, I will take you in the launch to the Customs and help you get past them. What do you think of that plan?"

The señorita's face glowed with pleasure and her eyes sparkled. She reached up with a little laugh and patted the mate affectionately on the cheek, thereby causing Bill and Joe, two A. B's who were scrubbing the deck, to be so overcome that they staggered against the rail and all but fell into the sea.

"Bravo, *compadre*," she praised. "Thou art indeed the wise one! Now it seems the road is open before us! How fortunate that we met that evening at the *hacienda* of cocoanuts! Tell me! At that time did you really think I was one of the Twelve, the one who was to meet thee in Mazatlan? Or was it by chance only that you took the shell from thy pocket and so became known to me?"

"Well, you see—I— We had met each other already in the cantina. And—" The mate continued to stammer, while his slow-moving wits frantically sought the right thing to say; "I thought you might be the right woman—so I took a chance."

"So? But you had not made yourself known to Don," she continued, a questioning look clouding her face. "Don knew thee only as one of the officers of this ship."

A cold sweat broke out on the mate and he shuffled his feet uneasily. This was his first attempt at amateur detective work, and he felt that he was fumbling the job, and would betray himself if she asked many more questions.

"You see, señorita, I had only met him about an hour before I also met you, and there had been no opportunity. Besides—"

"Oh, aye, I see," she interrupted him, her face clearing of suspicion. "Nor had you a chance to meet Pedro who was more concerned about some wanton that had held his fancy than he was about the affair in hand. Miserable swine that he is! And yet, fortune has favored us, eh, *compadre*?"

"It certainly has," agreed the mate fervently, glad that the mistrust caused by his awkward replies to her questions had seemingly been dispelled. "You see, I have made it my business to become good friends with those fellows at the Customs in Galveston. They would never suspect me. And if you are discreet, I believe I can pass you through without suspicion. But how are you going to conceal the pearls? How many have you?" he concluded in a husky whisper, fearing that the question would again arouse her suspicions.

She gave him a swift, questioning, appraising glance. But nature had blessed the mate with a poker face and its broad, stolid surface was as enlightening as a wooden Indian's. Anyway, the time had come when she must trust him utterly if her carefully thought-out plan was to succeed. Besides, did he not possess a shell? And these, only twelve in number, had been guarded most jealously. And the mystic words—these he had also. Or should she test him yet again?

The señorita's mind was made up as swiftly as she had looked.

"Would you like to see the pearls?" she whispered.

The mate nodded.

"Come then, with me to my cabin. But—" she hesitated—"tarry here, *compadre* until I descend first and see if all is well. *El capitan*, the old pig, is perhaps already asleep. This I can readily perceive by listening at his door. Saint Guadalupe! Such snores does he possess. If I do not return in a few minutes, you may come. I will leave my door slightly ajar, and see to it that you tread very softly. Fear not the duenna. She, too, wears hidden in her bosom one of the twelve shells, which makes her one of us. Now I go."

In a few minutes the astonished mate was gazing at a shimmering pile of pearls that lay in the thick chamois-skin drawstring bag, like frozen globules of silvery moonlight.

"For four years, *compadre*, the pearl fishers of La Paz have been gathering these! And it is to Jose and Pedro to whom we are indebted for this fine collection. They have gathered patiently; here a pearl, there a pearl, being satisfied only with the very finest. Buying, gaming, or stealing as the need arose. Only the most perfect pearls. And it is to the credit of those two of the twelve that we have here a sufficient number to make four choice necklaces, worthy of any queen; and rivaling those possessed by her Majesty the Queen of Spain.

"And yet, after all the years of patient effort, at the very last moment, Pedro allowed his fancy for a common woman of Mazatlan to almost spoil it all. Because if I had not met thee, by chance, —— alone knows how long I could have held the Twelve together until another opportunity offered to reach thy city of New York, the best market in the world for these. Even now there are those among the Twelve who have grown suspicious of Don and myself. And because we have been so long delayed, they are clamoring for their share of the spoil.

"Ah! Aye! But now!" she whispered ecstatically holding out her hands over the lustrous heap of pearls, "our path is clear before us! And soon I shall have in the Bank of Mexico the gold moneys of thy rich country, that will enable me to once more hold up my head, as the well born should. And thou too, *compadre*," she added as a polite afterthought, "will have also thy share."

"But how can you get these pearls through the Customs?" asked the mate practically. "Is there a false bottom in your trunk? Or will you sew them up in your dress, or how? I don't see any way you can get them through, myself. And there seems to be quite a lot of them. A thousand dollars' worth, I should say!"

The mate's idea of the value of pearls had been gained from his investment in a fifty-dollar necklace of "synthetics" on his wife's last birthday. He was therefore unaware of the shock he had administered to the

señorita, until he looked up and saw her leaning against the duenna in a mock faint.

"One thousand dollars!" she gasped in fainter whisper, as she pretended to regain consciousness. "Why, you great donkey of the sea, three hundred thousand dollars gold is the very lowest price I would consider for these perfect beauties! When I begin to bargain, I shall first demand four hundred thousand dollars, no less! I would spit upon the buyer who dared offer me less than three hundred thousand! Thy own share in these pearls will be at the least, ten thousand. You dream, *compadre*, or else you make a jest!"

It was now the mate's turn to be surprized, and he came as near to fainting as mates are allowed to, under the International Marine Laws.

"But—but—how are you going to conceal all these pearls?" he stammered in confusion, realizing his mistake in values, and also aware of how closely he had again come to betraying himself.

The señorita, however, was too elated by the vision of victory she had conjured up to be unduly suspicious. She tapped significantly on the wicker basket that domiciled El Ojo.

"He who sleeps within will bear them safely past the Customs!" she declared dramatically. "I, thy *compadre*, who is spoken of in derision as the Señorita of the Serpent, there in Mazatlan, that abode of obscene swine. I have a very fine plan; a plan that can not fail. Perhaps I have partaken of the wisdom of the serpent in thinking out this plan, of which none of the others of the Twelve, dull wits that they are, would even dream. That it is a sure plan, I do declare."

"Do not deceive yourself, señorita," the mate said drily. "The Custom House officers are not fools. They are as keen as fox-hounds; and will inspect your snake's basket just as carefully as they will your other things. You must not hope to fool them in that way."

The señorita smiled and answered him with, "*Quien sabe?*" accompanied with that indescribable shrug of the shoulders and gesture of the hands that makes the "Who knows" of Mexico one of the most infuriating, indefinitely definite, incomplete complete answers that can be made in any language.

This was the last straw on the already overburdened patience of the mate. Muttering a profane imprecation that consigned all of the Twelve, irrespective of sex, to the uttermost depths of that part of the Gulf of Mexico over which they were then sailing, he turned to leave the cabin.

A quick grasp of his arm restrained him.

"Stay, *compadre!*" she pleaded softly, "and hear fully of my plan, which you must know, if you would fully aid me.

"Think you that these cunning *caballeros* of the Customs would likely look in a snake's maw for pearls of great price?"

The señorita showed her fine white teeth in a complacent smile as she noticed the blank look on the mate's face.

"Observe!" she continued, well pleased with herself, as she saw how her question had mystified her "*compadre.*" "Here are several small chamois bags made long and narrow. In these we will place the pearls, sewing them in securely. Then, when you announce that Galveston is in sight, Deluta here, and myself, will take these bags and grease them well with butter. We will take El Ojo, who has been carefully kept from food for many days, and is therefore very hungry. First, we will give him a meat-ball; then one of these bags; then a meat-ball; then a bag; and so on until all have been swallowed. This he will do greedily because of his great hunger. But if he will not, Deluta and I will hold his mouth well open and thrust them down his throat with this little stick, and he will be compelled to receive them.

"And afterwards, *compadre*, when the Customs House is reached and the officers approach to declare my property—behold! I will take El Ojo from his basket and will thrust him upon them. 'Señores, I salute you!' I will say. 'Observe! This is my pet snake. El Ojo by name, which means The Eye, because he regards the future and tells what is to be. Is he not fat? Is he not a little dove of a pet? With him to aid me, I hope to make my fortune telling fortunes in a little act of vaudeville in this, your great America. Regard also, señores, the basket in which I keep El Ojo. Examine it well, I beg.

"'*Socorro*, woman! Take away thy great snake!' the señores of the Customs will exclaim. 'Ugh! At any moment he may bite us! *Adalente!*'

"And then, *compadre*— Oh, aye. Then we seek out a hotel of the first class. We

will desire a room, one of the best! We receive it! And then Deluta here, and myself, we seize again upon El Ojo. We take his head in our hands, his body between our knees. We pry open his jaws. I grease my hand well. I thrust it down, far down his throat. I wiggle my fingers, so! El Ojo will hiss and squirm. He will be very angry. '*Diantre*,' he will hiss, 'first these women feed me, then they seek to haul out of my stomach that which they have bestowed! *Socorro!* I am being robbed!' Yet in the end, my poor pet will yield. He will disgorge! If he will not, a quick thrust of a penknife in his brain—a slit in his side and the pearls are once more restored to their bag and the bag hidden in the bosom of Deluta. A train is then selected, and in a few hours, Señorita Seraphina de La Rosa Marie Cerna, a wealthy hacienda's daughter and her duenna are on their way to thy New York with the family pearls for a resetting! Is it not a good plan?

"You then return on your ship to Mazatlan, and in a sufficient number of days, Deluta and I we return also to meet the Twelve in the appointed place, to divide the gold among each of us, as was agreed."

The señorita also wanted to say, "And in all of this you have it pretty soft, I'll say;" but as there is no Spanish equivalent, she had to content herself with, "And on this business, *compadre*, your task is a most agreeable one, and the safest.

"Are not you an officer of the ship of fruits, which is American? What know you of pearls and serpents that swallow them? Oh! Aye! But a gay old dog of the sea you will become when I hand thee thy share of the gold! Now you may go, *compadre*, for I have made all plain to thee. Is it not so?"

IT WAS a warm, sunshiny day when the *Maggie May* sighted Galveston, and Captain Daugherty himself was as quiet and peaceful as the gently heaving sea. The quarantine officers had boarded him, snooped around, admired the Señorita of the Serpent and her strange pet, accepted a brace of the captain's best cigars, gave him a clean bill of health and departed.

That morning the señorita had prepared a "heart-warmer" cocktail of generous proportions and sent it in with the early morning cup of coffee as a parting gift. Its tranquilizing effects triumphantly survived the irritating effects of the health officers' visit and still remained with him. For the time being he would have greeted even a barge captain pleasantly.

The launch was ready to depart for the Customs, with the señorita and the mate, leaving the *Maggie May* to make her slow way to her berth. The mate had gone to the chart-room to get the letter the captain had promised to write the Custom House officials in the señorita's behalf; and when he looked at the strangely pleasant, weather-beaten face of his chief and noted the unusual kindness in the shrewd old gray eyes, he had a sharp twinge of conscience.

Was he not acting deliberately disloyal in carrying out his malignant resolution of the day before to "let the mutton-headed old fool go ahead and bust his biler?" After all the Captain was not aware of the señorita's intentions and had no way of ascertaining them unless he told him. It was true that he had heretofore discouraged the mate's efforts to enlighten him. But maybe now he was in a more receptive mood. He would try again.

"Cap'n, it just naturally ain't right for me to go off with that—that—pearl bootlegger without tellin' you what I know! Why Cap'n, she has got—"

The look of benign kindliness faded from the Captain's face, to be replaced by a flush of irritable surprize.

"Jim, I thought we had done settled that seenyreeta business, an' here you come agin! I'll swear to —— that you air the ding-bustedest human bein' that I ever seen! Your disposition is somethin' terrible! I don't see how your wife lives with you! Why can't you let that poor Mexican gal alone? As I said before, it ain't none of our funeral. If she gits by them Custom House fellows, let her git by. That's my motto. I should worry about what she's got! Besides that, I don't believe she's got anything. I know she ain't got no more booze. Me an' you has drunk it all up. Quit bein' so distrustful an' try to be happy. That's my motto."

Anger, just and righteous anger, surged up in the mate's loyal and hairy breast; and there is no anger so ardent and so lasting as the anger of the misunderstood and self-justified man. With a gurgling grunt, because for the moment his outraged feelings were too intense for utterance, the mate

picked up the letter he had come for. With one long indignant stride he reached the chart-room door; turned and delivered a parting shot:

"All right! I done my best to tell you! Now don't you blame me if you an' me all of us don't git sent out to Leavenworth to make shoes for the rest of the convicts for about twenty years. Don't blame me! Remember that! I done my best to make you listen."

The mate all but leaped over the side into the launch, in which the señorita was already occupying the passenger's seat.

"Step on it, Big 'Un!" he ordered.

There was a preliminary *pop* or two; water churned astern, and they were off, leaving the captain somewhat bewildered, maybe nonplussed, but still valiant.

However, the engrossing business of making port, paying off the pilot, and signing pay-roll vouchers for the crew—duties usually delegated to the mate, prevented him from brooding over the dire forebodings of penal servitude as predicted by that officer.

In the early forenoon the *Maggie May* was securely made fast to her berth. The captain was sitting quietly in the chart-room, with his feet on the desk, reading that day's Galveston *News*, while waiting for the ship's watchman to come aboard.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he said gruffly, hoping that the harsh, forbidding tone would discourage Bill or Big 'Un from asking for extra shore leave. But when he looked up, he did not see the meek and apologetic countenance of one of his own crew. He saw instead the pleasant, rather aggressive face of Jeremiah Jenkins, the Custom House officer, to whom he had addressed the letter commending the Señorita of the Serpent to the good graces of the Custom House.

There was no time lost in parleying.

"Daugherty," Jenkins asked, extending a letter, "did you write this letter? Or is it a forgery?"

Captain Daugherty still retained some of the effects of the "heart-warmer," but nevertheless that organ missed a few beats, as he gazed down on his own cramped, irregular penmanship, which displayed its obvious "sea legs" on the official stationery of the Fruit Company, in warm commendation of the bearer, as a woman of trustworthy character and moral rectitude.

As he stared at this written evidence of the credulity of those who go down to the sea in ships, he suddenly realized that the artificial benevolence born of the "heart-warmer" had caused him to far exceed the known facts regarding his fair passenger. And his now thoroughly aroused racial caution warned him too late of its possible consequences.

"Yes—I—wrote it— That is—you see— It's about a Mexican woman I had as a passenger comin' up. What—what of it?" the captain faltered.

"What of it!" Jenkins reiterated dramatically. "Well ——'s to pay, that's what! Your mate's in jail; so is this woman and her maid. And that durn boa-constrictor snake, too, if you ask me! Now we want you to come over to our place at once and straighten things out if you can."

"What!" stuttered the captain, struggling to his feet on trembling legs; "Jim in jail! I never heard of such a thing!"

"Well, you are hearing of it now," Jenkins asserted. "And he wants you to come right over and bail him out. And we want you to come over and explain how come you to write that Mexican woman this here—valentine, and her coming into port with a ship-load of smuggled pearls. I don't mind saying, Daugherty, as a friend," added this Job's Comforter, "that this here letter you wrote to help that woman railroad herself through the Customs, is—well, suspicious, to say the least—if not downright incriminating. Why, that there woman has got about three hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls of—'the purest ray serene,'" Jenkins concluded triumphantly, remembering a poem of his school-days, in his efforts at description. "Come on now, and let's see what you can say for yourself."

Captain Daugherty followed him mechanically, tottering slightly as he walked along the deck to a car, and thence to the Custom House. He was only dimly aware of it all, as if he was in a dream. His mind was submerged, gone down under the sudden tidal wave of a great calamity. Occasionally he wet, or tried to wet, his dry lips with an equally dry tongue; and he whispered to himself. But what he whispered he didn't comprehend.

It was only after he was brought face to face with the mate in a private room at the Custom House, that he actually regained consciousness.

"Why, Jim!" he stammered, "what's the matter? Air you mixed up in this thing sure enough? Why didn't you tell me? I—"

The mate held up a broad, sea-scarred hand in interruption. Through the reddish tan of his weather beaten face shone that effulgent light of the just man made perfect. Seldom in this life does any man reach the spiritual level of perfect happiness, justly deserved and unalloyed. This consummation is rarer in a mate's life than it is in that of any other man's. Nirvana, the Mohammedan Seventh Heaven, killing your first lion—are simply nowhere!

Having for the first time in his life reached this state of blissful justification, Shannon intended to enjoy it fully. He squared his shoulders belligerently, drew in a deep breath of Galveston air, which in that part of town is permeated with the aroma of roasting coffee from the wholesale coffee houses, and proceeded to enjoy himself.

"Why, didn't I tell you? I done my level best to tell you! But what did I hear? I heard 'too durned suspicious', 'unfortunate disposition', 'wouldn't trust any one of the Twelve Apostles.' Them was the love words you handed me!"

"Why, Jim!" protested the captain. "You know, you had orter know anyhow, that I didn't mean nothin'. That's just my way! I—"

"Them was your very words!" the mate insisted, ignoring the protest. 'Don't see how your wife can live with you!' 'Of course the señorita is O. K. Didn't that Mexican admiral say she was?' 'Can't she mix the best cocktail you ever put under your hatches.'

"I tried to tell you that I thought that woman was as crooked as a boat-hook, but you hooted at it all, and would not listen. And then you sent me ashore with her, and this here letter of recommendation of your'n! An' me tryin' to tell you, even when we was actually shovin' off, that I didn't think she was just right."

"But Mr. Jenkins here, he knowed her the minute he seen her. She's the slickest diamond and pearl smuggler there is! An' the International Jewelers' Association have a standing reward of five thousand dollars for her capture. So he laid glad hands on her, an' on that educated snake of hers, an' slammed 'em all in jail. An' he's goin' to jug me, too, as a party afore the fact, or as an *ipso facto*, or somethin' or other of them legal cuss words, if you don't go my bond."

"Yes, Cap'n, that's the way she stands," Jenkins confirmed, taking up the narrative of misfortune. "And unless you can satisfactorily explain your part of the business, writing that letter, I mean, I am afraid we will have to hold you, too. And I don't mind adding, in a friendly sort of way, you understand, that it seems to me, it will be rather hard to explain why you was so all fired anxious to railroad that young woman through Quarantine and the Customs! It would look mighty fishy to a United States district-attorney. But that's all up to you, of course."

The captain staggered to a chair, sank down in it and glared at Jenkins and the mate. There was not even a furtive flicker of fellow feeling in either face. They were as sympathetic and responsive as corpses. Still bewildered and perplexed, he fumbled with the small bronze propeller which he wore on his watch chain, while he tried to coax a helpful conclusion from the chaos of his mind.

"Jenkins, he faltered at last. "Gimme a check-book on the Seamen's Bank, and I'll write you a check for two thousand to cover Jim's appearance bond, if you think that's what the amount will be. I don't believe he done any wrong, and I know I didn't do none, except to be as dumb as—as—one of them old ship figgerheads hangin' in the Pilots' Club-House. I'll make the check four thousand to cover my own appearance, if you think I'm anyways a party to this here pearl smugglin'. All I ask is—"

What the captain intended to ask was, that the Fruit Company and the public at large be not informed of the affair of the pearls. But when he remembered Jenkins' gossipy nature, he shut his mouth grimly, and prepared for the worst. He was satisfied that nothing he could do or say would prevent the whole story from being the restaurant gossip of the wholesale district before night, and in the Galveston *News* in the morning.

All he could hope for was to get a stay of the execution by reaching the office of the Fruit Company before the story did, explain the whole matter as he saw it and resign before he was discharged.

Just as he was arranging in his mind the exact text of his resignation, the outer door

of the office was opened quickly to admit of the energetic entrance of the junior Custom House inspector, whose manner bore all the pomp and circumstance of victory. And in spite of frantic winks, warning gestures, and looks of justifiable homicide from Jenkins and the mate, he proceeded to "spill the beans."

"Well, Shannon, you can go on home now. We've jugged the lady and her elderly assistant, and turned the snake over to the Botanical Gardens. She don't even suspect that you double-crossed her, as she seen us, with her own eyes, lock you up in that cell on the men's side of the jail.

"I'll see that you get the reward. But for ——'s sake keep all this quiet. Absolutely. So we can pinch the others through the Mexican secret service. Remember. Not a word of this to anybody in Galveston. Not even at home."

Then he saw the captain. He could hardly help it, because his cheering words were rapidly expanding the captain's soul to its usual generous proportions.

"Hello, Cap'n!" the bean-spiller exclaimed. "That was a great stunt Shannon pulled off, wasn't it? And your letter helped us turn the trick, too. I wouldn't have believed that a snake could carry around three hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls, if I hadn't seen that woman, with my own eyes, when she pulled 'em out of his mouth, over there in that room in the Gal-Vez Hotel, that we had all rigged up with a dictograph and a periscope peeper, all ready for her, after Shannon here put us wise. You ought to make him split the reward with you, fifty-fifty."

Jenkins and the mate flushed guiltily and grinned sheepishly, while the captain straightened up in his chair and waited joyfully for his circulation and blood-pressure to reach normal again. This was occurring rapidly—very rapidly.

"You see, Cap'n," Jenkins began apologetically, favoring his assistant with another murderous glance. "It was just a little joke that me and Jim planned to run on you for an hour or so, then we aimed to tell you just how it was. Didn't we, Jim?" The mate nodded weakly. "You see, Jim here understands Spanish good, and that woman mistook him for one of her own gang, because he found one of the shells they use to recognize each other with. And by the same token, because Jim was the mate on the *Maggie May*, they thought she was the boat due from Tampico with the American crook on it that was to help 'em smuggle the pearls. And it was this crook that they thought Jim was. See? So she told him the whole thing before you reached port, and as soon as they landed, Jim put us wise, while the woman inspectors was giving the señorita the once over.

"But when we rushed 'em in the room we had all set for 'em, we had to arrest Jim too; otherwise he would never be safe again in Mexican ports.

"And then when Jim told us about you sort of—thinking the señorita was just about all right, we decided we'd play a little joke on you, to get even with you for the way you man-handled us when we joined the Elks. Remember?"

The captain's heart had resumed its usual number of knots an hour, and his mind was again functioning at full steam ahead. So he could afford to return the grins of his tormentors, as he crossed his legs and hitched himself back in his chair. But he was a scion of that Highland breed, whose creed of life is, that if the ship must go down she shall go with the crew at parade rest—the colors flying and the band playing the national anthem. So he took a cigar from his case—lighted it, while calmly gazing at Jenkins and the mate, then casually, nonchalantly, between puffs, he said:

"Yes, men, I'm glad that Jim put this here affair over without help from me. You know, fellers, I acted like I did on purpose, so as to let him get all the reward himself. Of course, to do this, I had to let on like the seenyreeta had me fooled. But she didn't. I got tipped off by a friend the night afore we left Mazatlan. But when I seen that Jim was wise to her, too, I just played mum.

"You see, I know Jim better than he knows his own self. I knowed that he was so fair an' square that if he thought I knowed anything about them pearls, why, he would have wanted to share the reward share and share alike. That's Jim all over —always does more than his share. So I just let on like I was dumb, sort of *in statu quo*, as the lawyers say. But I done it with my fingers crossed. So you all give Jim the reward money. He needs it worse than I do. Have a cigar, gents."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THE following letter opened with a comment (favorable) on "The Profaned Shovel," by Edmund M. Littell, dealing with the steel industry, in a January issue.

Berkeley, California.

Few persons other than those connected with the vital industries are aware that nearly every manufactured article that we need in our every-day life has caused, during one time or another since it started on its journey as raw material, suffering or even death.

IN YEARS past we welcomed all the foreigners that could be prevailed on to emigrate, herded them into the large industrial centers and set them to work at the long dirty grind that our native citizens would not touch.

As a rule we cared not for their well being and laughed at their attempts to speak our language. They were forced to herd with their kind, talking the language of their fatherland. Soon were there newspapers printed for them, that told of their native land and its doings. They were asked to become citizens that they might vote as ordered, but did they learn of the real institutions and customs of long standing of this country?

Some did, but many yet speak English just well enough to do our dirty work, such jobs as we deem demeaning to our standards of work and living. Many such but lived to gather the Gelt and back to their country to live.

Fostered by being able to keep up to date, by reading their newspapers and not knowing of our true ideals (reading our books, etc.) they come to think little of us, accepting the liberty granted them, free from police supervision, here where one is deemed innocent till proved guilty, where paid lying witnesses are heard and oftentimes believed, where law-breaking is printed in glaring headlines.

I WOULD that we might keep only such foreigners as really wanted to become citizens, who learned our language and understood our ideals, read only our representative newspapers (yellow press barred) and lived that their children and grandchildren might become citizens that this country would be proud to claim as its own.

Why should we let exist, feeding on us, leeches who live but to fatten themselves on our life-blood? They have a mighty contempt for us and our laws, yet the reason many of them migrate is that the laws of their country would not put them away for safe keeping.

Sounds like I am riled up? I am, but I wonder if it won't take till another generation before the ones interested really wake up and do what they should to Americanize those who want to stay here and kick out all that are here for but greedy gain.

Talbot Mundy sure started something and I sure hope that he gains his point, as in no case of ancient history can any one be sure but that prejudice has had a great deal to do with the flavor of what is written—of a country or man.—S. W. HENDERSON.

ONE of us who spent his early years on the Danube takes issue with Negley Farson, of our writers' brigade, as to his characterization of the Danube in a letter to us. You will remember that Mr. Farson made the trip in a motor-boat. At last reports he had reached the Black Sea. I'd have sent him Mr. Necker's letter, but as he's moving right along and has mail forwarded only at intervals there it would take too long to get a reply.

However, the expression with which Mr. Necker takes issue may be interpreted in many ways and if these two comrades were to meet they'd probably find themselves pretty well in agreement. Also, the Danube may have changed somewhat in nearly half a century, and Mr. Farson may have had in mind another section of the river. Mr. Necker evidently knows what he's talking about and Mr. Farson is a trained and reliable observer, so apparent contradictions will undoubtedly turn out to be fully explainable.

Monterey, California.

Referring to a letter by Mr. Negley Farson in *Adventure* for January 20, 1926, I am greatly surprised over one of his remarks about the River Danube; and I am more surprised that you, as editor, should repeat that particular sentence in print. Mr. Farson says "*it's no good for a craft with any draft whatsoever*," meaning the Danube.

NOW any boy or girl who attended a first-class school in America learned enough of geography to know that the Danube is one of the largest rivers in Europe and navigable to very respectable looking steamers and other craft, from the city of Ratisbone (Regensburg) in Bavaria clear down to the Black Sea. I, however, did not get my information from the geography. I acquired it by personal and actual experience. To show how, I give you a sketch of my younger days. Now I am past seventy.

I WAS born and raised at Ratisbone, Bavaria. At that place there was, in fact is yet, a good-sized shipyard which originally had been built by a Bavarian company under the protectorate of the King, then Ludwig I. Later, in the early sixties, this concern was merged into the Austrian Danube Steamboat Company, the headquarters of which was, and is still, at Vienna, Austria. My grandfather had been employed by the Bavarian Company, but when they and the Austrian Co. consolidated, he held his job and subsequently all his sons, five of them, served in various capacities in that company for many years. Hence it was no wonder that I myself in course of time entered that same service, and I did so in 1871.

I began as a cabin-boy on one of the steamers plying then between Ratisbone, Passau and Linz. The latter city is in Austria. I was quickly promoted to a higher rate and by 1878 I became a First Steersman, in the German language called "Steuermann." In that capacity I served four years longer during which time I served on steamers plying on various divisions between Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade and Orsova. As in 1882 I left that service to come to America I never got down as far as the mouth of the Danube, the Black Sea. I think I had learned quite a lot of the river and the shipping thereon.

The steamers the Austrian Company are building vary in draft according to the division on which they are used. Boats going as far upstream as Ratisbone, Bavaria, draw not less than five feet, while those running from Linz, Austria, downward, draw as much as eight feet.

Up to 1875 the company had a regular service even as far above Ratisbone as Donauworth with boats of five-foot draft. That service was abandoned as "non payable" after construction of railroad.

AS TO sandbars, I agree with Mr. Farson. Wherever the river has a chance to broaden out through a flat country small islands are formed, but these had never been a detriment to shipping since the main flow of the river is always clearly defined, even at low water. Anyway, the Danube is much safer to travel in a small boat than the Mississippi.

There are four places on the Danube which might have caused trouble to Mr. Farson, but he does not say so. There is for instance the so-called "Shachlet" between Vilshofen and Passau in Bavaria. Going over that place the steamers had to take on a special pilot on account of the enormous number of boulders hidden below the surface.

Then there is the, to tourists, well known "Strudel" near Grein, below Linz in Austria. This was really a dangerous passage in times gone by, but had long since been regulated. For a small craft with a stranger at the helm, it is still risky.

Then finally the famous "Iron Gate" below Orsova, which was really the greatest and most dangerous handicap for all boats. Since 1896 there exists a special built canal on the right side of the Danube through which boats now pass instead of through the "Iron Gate" itself. I never had seen this canal.

TO GIVE you an idea of the steamboats plying upon the Danube I inclose a few illustrations. One represents a passenger boat of the division Passau—Linz, the other a freighter towing heavy loaded wareboats. All the boats built by the Austrian company are of iron. The passenger boats are all side-wheelers, also most of the freight steamers, though on the lower Danube they run some propellers.

Of course there are other companies which run steam and wareboats upon the Danube, all of which goes to show that the river is not so "deserted" and lonesome as Mr. Farson makes his readers believe.

As to the Danube being "mud colored" instead of "blue," we must remember that Johann Strauss was a composer of music, and composers and poets are permitted by an unwritten law to give their imagination free runs. The Danube, at a normal waterstand, is really more green than blue, except at high-water when it imitates our Missouri or Ohio and the Father of Rivers. Then, too, when one of the many tributaries of the Danube happens to be on a rampage, these will disfigure any color the river may have had.

NOW do not think I try to defend the Danube because it originates in my native country. I am a firm believer in "See America First," yet we also should appreciate the beauty spots of other countries or we are termed snobs.

In conclusion, to convince you that I am at least a good 99 per cent. American (one per cent. was lost by selecting the wrong birth-place), I give you a short record of my doings in this country.

I already mentioned that I had left that steamboat company in 1882 to come to America. Well, I did come, enlisted shortly after in the U. S. Army and served continuously 31 years and 3 months including the Spanish-American and the late World War. No, I am not a hero. During the Spanish scrap I served actually upon the Battlefield of San Juan, but during the World War I only did home service, because when I was called back from retirement I would have been too old to do any better than clerical work.

Excuse the scribbling of an old man but be assured that I always love *Adventure*.—JOHN H. NECKER.

A later letter from Negley Farson, part of which I have omitted on the chance that, though there is in it no reflection upon Mr. Farson, it might possibly make things mildly awkward for him at some time in the future:

Sulina, Roumania.

Just a line to let you know that we have reached the Black Sea. We blew in here just one jump ahead of the winter—a close finish—and dropped anchor the same night a blizzard drove down from Russia—which has been driving down ever since. Steamers headed out have put back; the last soundings showed a foot less water over the bar; and one poor old tramp has been plunging about for five days in the roads, waiting for her captain who is ashore here and can't get out through the seas.

Flame is a coat of gray ice. And I think the last few days in her have been about as tough as they make. The crew and I used to emerge like Arctic explorers in the morning—out of the igloo. We have no heat, you understand, except from two Primus cooking stoves, and her cabin sweated, drips at night like a shower. When it came to chipping ice to free the doors in the morning I decided it was not good enough. We are ashore now, in "the" hotel, a sad little hole where we do most of our cooking on the stove by our beds.

The crew and I were up in Bessarabia. I wanted to be among Russians again and see the wild swans off the great Danube Bars. . . . But more of this later on.

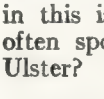
In the meantime we watch the glass falling and await a tramp steamer, now loading up river, to take us on down to Constantinople. She is going to have a race also, I fear, as the jam ice is running in the Iron Gates—and we heard today that the river was freezing at Braila. So much for that.

In the meantime *Flame* is going to be beached, as soon as there is a let-up in the gale, and will be covered in for the winter. As this is being done by a Scot I know I will find her all shipshape in the spring. These Scots! I hope the race doesn't die out. You appreciate 'em especially in countries like this.

BESSARABIA is wonderful. I lived with the sturgeon fishermen in a mud hut on an island in the delta. The "island," I might say, was a strip of mud and reeds one foot above water. There were 13 of us in that hut—2 women, 10 men and a boy. It was a sort of patriarchial existence. Grandfather and wife, son and wife, Feodor—the captain of the fishing company—and I, all sleeping on the top of the stove. The rest slept on the floor. At three o'clock the wife stood up on the bed and kneaded bread. They bowed to their ikon before every bite, but drank vodka like water. We rowed out to sea under a big moon—saw the wild geese and swan, like ghosts on the bars, and fished lines out of salt water so cold that it froze on the bailer. During a let-up in the seas the crew and I came down the Black Sea to Sulina in this fishing "lodka." Now the gale has set in to blow itself out, the poor souls can't get back. I saw Feodor today on the beach—he looks like one of Ghenghis Khan's raiders.

"Bad luck," I sympathized. "I almost wish you had not taken us."

"*Nitchevo, baron*—it's nothing. We'll get home." He tapped his pocket and grinned: "A lot of hard work—and a lot of vodka. That's a fisherman's life."—NEGLEY FARSON.



IRISHMEN, attention! John Dorman tells and asks something about the Bleeding Hand of Ulster, which gives title to his story in this issue. Incidentally, isn't it more often spoken of as the Bloody Hand of Ulster?

Baltimore, Maryland

The Legend of the Bleeding Hand of Ulster as given is a composite account, taken from several people. I haven't been able to find a written account of it. The Head Line, whose steamers' funnels are bedecked with the hand, dripping three rosy drops of blood, probably know it, but their representatives here in Baltimore seem not to. What I mean is, the legend undoubtedly is a genuine legend; that my version of it is the most widely accepted I couldn't say.

'Perhaps some readers could furnish variations of it—JOHN DORMAN.

Years ago I used to know something about the history of ancient Ireland, one of the most interesting histories to be found anywhere, but my memory is a sad affair. If I'm not mistaken, a bloody hand has for centuries been the crest or emblem of the O'Neills or O'Neils, who, with the O'Donnells, have written their name large in Irish history. The version of the legend given by Mr. Dorman seems entirely familiar but of course, like all legends, is subject to many variations.

If you are not familiar with Ireland's ancient history—don't know, for example, that for several centuries she led all western Europe in education and culture, you will find it an interesting field for browsing. Don't, however, trust much to the English historians, who, from Giraldus Cambrensis on up, have suffered, sometimes from bias, nearly always from lack of sufficient knowledge of things Irish. Distrust of Irish authorities on the ground of bias is equally natural and too often warranted, but at least most of them know something about the real facts of their material. The safe thing to do is to turn to the French, German and Italian authorities on things Celtic.

PEARLS, boa constrictors, smugglers, and poorly paid Border guards. Something from William P. Barron in connection with his story in this issue.

American writers have never thrown the glamour of romance over our smugglers, as has been done for the same guild in Europe. For this reason, many of our people are not aware that smuggling exists in this country, except in the case of rum-running.

HOWEVER, our Mexican Border offers a fertile field for these talented gentry, and smuggling of all sorts, from introducing undesirable aliens to bootlegging the meek and lowly pulque, goes merrily on. And its suppression is left to a corporal's guard of devoted, patriotic, underpaid and unappreciated Federal Border Guards, who are assisted, to some extent, by the Texas Rangers.

On the other side of the Rio Grande, opposed to them, are well organized units of various sorts of smugglers. These have headquarters in all of the larger Mexican cities, and secret agents in the seaports of Europe, Asia, perhaps Africa, and certainly Cuba. Their perfected organization enables them to operate a smoothly running underground railway that guarantees to land you on the soil of Uncle Sam—for a proper monetary consideration. Or see to it that you have a case of Scotch for Christmas, dope or "snow" (cocaine) for peddling among the Pipe Hitters or Snuffers. Or, always obliging, they will provide you with diamonds, pearls, opals, Mexican drawn-work, or "what will you?"

IF YOU are skeptical, go down to Havana, to Tampico, or to Monterey. Disguise yourself to represent any nationality that suits your fancy. Then frequent the cafés, letting it be known, with a foreign accent, that you are very anxious to enter the United States but that you are barred because of —well, for any reason that occurs to you.

You will not be left long to languish. In a few days you will be approached, suavely and cautiously, perhaps by a lady, maybe by a gentleman. The size of your bank-roll will be estimated, by adroit questioning, and then will come an offer to chaperon you across the Rio Grande.

MY STORY deals with the least known of the Border smugglers. And, by the same token, the easiest of accomplishment, namely the smugglers of precious stones.

La Paz, where these pearls come from, is a small slender strip of a town on the West Coast, with the sea in front, and a desert mesa land behind it. Spanish adventurers landed here about three hundred years ago, and found pearls. This gradually led to the town becoming the center of a thriving pearl fishery, which it still is, to a certain extent. Pearl fanciers contend that here are found the purest rayed and most lustrous pearls in the world, but not in very large quantities. For this reason, but chiefly because of the ingrowing aversion of the inhabitants for work, the pearl trade has greatly dwindled.

MY IDEA for making of the boa constrictor the host for the smuggled pearls is a memory flareback to the days of my youth. When I was about twelve my *beau ideal* of what a man should be was "Uncle" Joe Murphy, the worthless, lovable, bibulous old vagabond who was "the Snake Charmer" in "Aunt" Mollie Bailey's Show. Which was a Texas-Mexican itinerant amusement factory of that day and generation. This show made all the small Texas and northern Mexico towns, requiring about a year to complete the circuit.

Not to have been born within the magic circle of Mollie Bailey's annual felicitations is a congenital misfortune which can be properly appreciated only by those who had the good luck to be thrilled yearly by the performances of her pet canaries, her trained pigs, educated snakes, and Uncle Joe's wise cracks. I would pause here, in passing to drink "A cup of kindness" to the memory of "Aunt" Mollie, in gratitude for the many happy hours she gave me. She always wore cowboy boots, smoked cigars, could carry her "licker" like a ranchman, and died with her boots on. She was a regular Sourdough.

UNCLE JOE'S snakes were really marvelously trained, for snakes. But I am not going to have some one call me a liar by telling about the stunts I actually saw those snakes perform. Uncle Joe used to tell us admiring, and credulous, kids many hair-raising tales of "the Auld Sod," and Mexico as well. One of these stuck to my memory. How once he saved Aunt Mollie's entire bank-roll when the show was attacked by Mexican bandits while traveling

overland from Eagle Pass to Monterey. This he did by quickly wrapping the bills in waxed paper, greasing it with lard, and thrusting it down the throat of St. Patrick, a large boa constrictor and his favorite pet.

The old man would always end this credulity recital with—

"An' do ye mind, lads, when them bandits had cleared out, the old bye coughed up the whole amount of Missus' Bailey's roll; savin' tin dollars, that is."

And he would wink, thereby implying that he had reserved ten dollars as whisky-money for himself, as a reward for his ingenuity.

I have often wanted to use this snake swallowing stunt in a story, but because I was not reasonably sure of its possibility, I did not dare, until I read the July-August number of the *Natural History Magazine*, 1925. There is an article in that number that practically confirms the old Irishman's tale. At any rate, it proves to my satisfaction that these large prey-swallowing snakes can be forced to take food that is sewn up in sausage skins or the like. And that they can be made to digorge by thrusting the hand and arm down their gullets, without serious harm to the snake or to the thrustee.

So, with Natural History to back me, I am reasonably safe in saying that this method of smuggling a necklace or two of valuable pearls is not beyond the bounds of possibility or probability.

In other contemplated stories I hope to deal with some other features of the smuggling game, carried on across our Southern Border. And if my efforts result in arousing those of you about the Camp-Fire, who are citizens of the United States, to write your Congressman and Senators, to increase the pay, and strengthen the arms of our Border Guards, I will be amply repaid.—WILLIAM P. BARRON.

FROM Sidney Herschel Small something concerning the facts around which is builded his complete novel in this issue:

San Rafael, California.

The Taiyals are supposed to be of South Sea origin. In appearance they resemble the Dyaks. The population of all the "raw" savages in Formosa is supposed to be about 150,000. Nobody has ever taken a census of the Taiyals beyond the guard-line. For obvious reasons. The heads would be counted—but not the Taiyals'.

When the Chinese army was disbanded thirty years ago—when the Japanese took over the Beautiful Isle—all of their fire-arms were left in the country, and the entire collection gradually made its way where the highest price was offered—up in the hills, where the Taiyals still head-hunt as their favorite amusement and means of getting wives. More heads, more wives.

MAYBE it isn't a record, but a photograph taken by the official photographer of Taiwan, on a guarded expedition past the *aiyu-sen*, shows a collection in one village of over four hundred heads—nice, polished, white skulls, all in good shape. How long it took the hundred or so Taiyals of the village to collect 'em I don't know. In addition, every hut has its dozen or so. What percentage of these belong to the conquering Japanese nobody knows, and the Japanese don't say.

Even the *National Geographic*, so I understand, refused to allow an anthropologist to make an investigation beyond the line of guards. Harry Franck was satisfied to look over the wire, and when that fellow doesn't want to go a place nobody else has been, you can bet the odds were a million to one against him. So far as I know, there is no record in recent years of a white man going alone into the Taiyal hills and coming back. Unless they're with Japanese soldiery. (Not police; the Taiyals ate 'em alive, until the Government sent the best men they had.)

All of this is preliminary to saying that I wasn't there myself. I have drawn from all of the available sources, from the early Japanese reports to Franck's "Japan and Formosa."

THE live-wire barrier isn't imagination. It exists, and has done the work pretty well. In one way the Taiyals' resistance has been a blessing. Instead of clearing out the district, the Japanese early began reforestation, and are planting tree for tree. The first plantings are being cut now.

The value of the average-sized camphor tree—say with a basal circumference of 12 feet—is about $5,500 at the present market price.

Lest any one get the bug to go after some of them, let me say that the Japanese Government, aside from maintaining a monopoly, doesn't give permission to pass over the guard-line. Not to anybody, although I understand that once or twice, for reasons I don't know, it has been done. If you go to the camphor district at all, you're somebody to begin with. No guards, no go. A few traders—Chinos—go as far as the line to barter for tortoise-shell and deer-horns, but the practise has been frowned upon—even trading with the semi-civilized "ripe" savages, because the traders very often lost their heads as well as their packs.

ANYHOW, even if you managed to make faces at the Taiyals and got 'em friendly, and managed to distil the chips, you couldn't ship it out of the country. In the Orient a monopoly's a monopoly.

The Germans tried synthetic camphor, but the cost of manufacture was prohibitive. Don't know what luck there has been with it in the last year or two. None, I suppose. The Japanese "allotment" for the United States is as large as ever.

As for the four hundred heads collected in one village, if that's hokum, I doubt it. The photograph was attested to by the Chief of the Taiwan Camphor Division, and if the Japanese wanted propaganda, they'd work it the other way. Anyhow, blame him, and not me. But I think it's a record.—S. H. S.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure" runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations. Full list in second issue of every other month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader. Free Identification Card, Forwarding Service; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue.*)

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When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding Stations to LAURENCE JORDAN.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, unstamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**

2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**

3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**

4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**

5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
14—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—35. Europe. In Seven Parts
36—38. South America. In Three Parts
39. Central America
40—42. Mexico. In Three Parts
43—51. Canada. In Nine Parts
52. Alaska
53. Baffinland and Greenland
54—59. Western U. S. In Six Parts
60—64. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
65—74. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O, P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

Potatoes

THE origin of the humble tuber.

Request:—Where was the Irish potato first grown, in the U. S. or in Ireland?

Who introduced it in the U. S., if it was first grown in Ireland?

If it is a native plant of America who carried it to Ireland?"—E. R. NEWMAN, Clearwater, Fla.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The potato is a native of elevated districts of tropical and sub-tropical America. It has been found growing wild in the Andes of South America, Mexico and the Rocky Mountain region of North America. The potato was cultivated and used as food long anterior to the discovery of America by Europeans. It seems to have been taken to Europe by the Spaniards in the 16th century, and spread from Spain into the Netherlands, Burgundy, and Italy, but only to be cultivated in a few gardens as a curiosity, and not for general use as a food.

It appears to have been taken to Ireland from Virginia by Hawkins in 1565; and to England by Sir Francis Drake in 1585, without attracting much notice, till it was a third time imported from America by Sir Walter Raleigh. A long time elapsed before it began to be extensively cultivated. The idea at last arose that it might be used with advantage for feeding swine and other cattle and by and by that it might be used by poor people and for preventing famine on failure of grain crops. The example had been set in Ireland, where the potato had already come into cultivation to an extent far greater than in any other European country and with evident advantage. From Ireland it was introduced into Lancashire about the end of the 17th century, soon became general there and thence spread over England.

The potato, besides affording food for cattle, is next to the principal cereals the most valuable of plants for human food. It is used also for various purposes in the arts. No food plant is more widely diffused; it is cultivated in temperate and in subtropical countries. No more important event of its kind has ever taken place than the general introduction of the potato culture into the husbandry of agricultural countries. It has undoubtedly prevented the formerly frequent returns of famine.

The potato can be grown almost anywhere in the temperate or sub-tropical regions, but reaches its highest perfection in cool climates and fertile but slightly sandy soils.

The cultivation of the potato in the U. S. did not become general till about 1800. In 1840 the production exceeded 100,000,000 bushels and there has been a steady increase since.

Besides its value as a culinary vegetable, the potato is important in other respects. Its starch is easily separated and in large proportions. It is used largely in textile manufactories under the name farina, which is converted into dextrine or British gum. In Holland and in Russia, where there is difficulty in keeping potatoes through the winter, large quantities of starch are made and converted into sugar or syrup. In northern Europe much spirit for drinking is made from potatoes; it is called potato brandy.

Maize and the potato are the two greatest gifts which America has given to the rest of the world. Hope that the above answers your query satisfactorily and that you will not hesitate to write again some time.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Brakemen

PASSENGER or freight — which shack has the better job?

Request:—"As I have read your notice in the *Adventure* Magazine I would like to have information concerning passenger brakemen in U. S."—CECIL P. SIBERTS, Sidney, Ind.

Reply, by Mr. Newman:—Answering your letter, regarding passenger brakemen in the United States, I wish to advise you first of the duties of this job.

A passenger brakeman must understand the movements of trains, and as a general rule must have seen service on freight trains. He is required to load and unload passengers, attend to the ventilation of cars, call stations, set out and pick up cars when necessary on passenger trains, do flagging at rear of his train when necessary, and many other little jobs that come up in the operation of passenger trains.

Most passenger brakemen or flagmen are taken from the freight service on the large railroad systems, while some of the smaller roads will place a new man right on passenger train, as most freight brakemen do not care for passenger train service, as they make more money on freight trains.

In the State of Indiana the law requires 2 brakemen on passenger trains of over 4 cars, and I have known cases where a number of flagmen were taken on account of this law without experience in freight service. It depends what road you make application with, but the roads always want experienced men as a rule.

You secure a job of this kind by applying to the trainmaster of the division.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Boomerangs

WHAT they won't do; what they will do; all about them.

Request:—"I take the opportunity offered by 'Ask Adventure' in hope that you can give me some information in regard to the Australian boomerang.

Several years ago I read a story in which a man was murdered by a boomerang which struck him on the head with sufficient force to crush his skull. According to the story, this did not interfere with

the flight of the boomerang which returned to the thrower. Does that sound reasonable to you or is it just imagination on the part of the author?

Now for the questions: (1) What was the boomerang used for? (2) What kind of wood is it made of? (3) How heavy is it? (4) What is the shape of it? (5) Would it be possible to have one sent here and how much would it cost?

If there is anything else in the line of information in regard to the above it will be greatly appreciated."—D. McL., San Rafael, Calif.

"P. S. Use initials if this is sent to *Adventure*."—D. McL.

Reply, by Mr. Norman:—Your query opens a most interesting field of enquiry. But let me say right here that it is quite impossible for a boomerang to return to the thrower after it has struck its object, so that, after crushing the skull in the circumstances you relate, the weapon had lost its impetus and fell to the ground. Otherwise the story was quite true. Now for your questions:

1. The boomerang which was used on the occasion you cite was necessarily a war-weapon or a man-killer, especially designed for the purpose.

2. Boomerangs are made out of one or the other of the hardwoods, such as iron bark, jarrah and honeysuckle. The lighter woods of the wattle species are used such as myall gidyea or ironwood.

3. The war boomerang is of heavy construction weighing from 3 to 5 lbs., and made on the one plane so that, if laid on a level surface, it lies flat, or nearly so. This type of weapon measures up to 30 inches across the arc. It is usually fluted on the convex side and when used in combat it is hurled directly at the enemy so as to ricochet up under his shield, just as a good length ball gets beneath the bat in a game of cricket. Experts define a boomerang as a gyroplane (that is, a flat spinning weapon) capable of describing a more or less horizontal and circular flight.

4. The subjoined illustrations will convey a graphic idea of it.

5. Yes, boomerangs can be purchased at from 2½ to five dollars apiece. The cheaper weapon is specially manufactured at La Perouse by a polyglot populace for sale to boobs and nuts, by modern tools. The genuine article can be obtained for five dollars. Remit either sum to me and I'll send same to you by post. You can get the customs charges (if any) at your end.

The boomerang is as much Australian as the kangaroo or the Cyre-bird. It is true claims of an Egyptian origin have been put forward, but examination shows that they were built in ignorance of the special structure or the remarkable properties of the boomerang. I refer to its curious twist and its wonderfully accurate return flight. Representations of similar weapons are to be found on many Egyptian monuments.

The earliest known reference to the Australian boomerang was made by Captain William Danipier, who visited the West Australian coast in 1688. Then, in April, 1770, when Captain James Cook dropped anchor in Botany Bay (Sydney) he collected several weapons from the natives. Captain Danipier describes it as a cutlass in shape. "It was in the form of a scimitar," wrote Captain Cook.

Boomerangs are made in two shapes—the "returning" or the "come-back" and the "non-return" or the "war-boomerang." They are made both left-handed or right-handed, according to the needs of the throwers.

The Zuni Indians of Arizona are stated to have used a curved implement somewhat like a shortened boomerang, with a knob on the throwing end, curved in shape. It was thrown directly forward.

Examine a boomerang and you will note that the grain of the wood follows the contour of the weapon. The artificer selects a suitable portion of a tree—like the knee of a boat—from which to fashion the weapon. The root or a section of the ascending trunks chosen for choice. Failing these, a well-bent limb or a twisted branch is selected. The weapon is perfected by fire and the crude appliances of the artificer.

Every boomerang possesses both a flat and a convex side. When thrown, it travels horizontally, with the flat side beneath. All boomerangs look alike, nevertheless there are sensible differences in size. The war-boomerangs are often painted with earthy pigments ornamented with swansdown and anointed with human blood. The name "boomerang" like many other Australian objects, has a strictly local derivation. Among the Botany Bay natives it is known as "BUMARIN."

Doubt still exists as to the manner in which the natives arrived at such an effective weapon as the boomerang. It is suggested the knowledge was derived from observing the flight of a gum-leaf. One of the amusements of the younger set of natives today is to throw dry leaves into the ascending smoke of the camp-fire and note their curious spiral behaviors. But however discovered—and it must not be forgotten that constant intertribal wars necessitated the creation of such a weapon—it is a fact that the boomerang performs its duty with almost human instinct.

It is most interesting to observe a boomerang-thrower at work. With careful step he advances slowly, holding the weapon by either extremity, the other end pointing toward the enemy. Then he notes the direction of the wind, observes any object which may hinder its flight and pausing for a moment he hurls it forward with all his strength. The weapon first travels in a straight line. then turns its flat surface to the earth, with its convex uppermost. It makes a circuit, rotating horizontally all the time. If it misses its objective it returns to the thrower. At times it is sent skimming close to the ground. When nearly spent it rises high in the air and returns to the thrower. At other times it will circle over the head of the thrower and gradually descend in a spiral curve. There is no limitation to its action, even in the case of the same boomerang.

It is a most effective weapon for bringing down game in the air. And its activities are most disconcerting when thrown at a flock of ducks, pigeons or cockatoos. In the hands of an expert thrower, the weapon sweeps wildly through the air; so eccentric are its motions that it is easy to imagine it endowed with life as it rotates in full swoops in rapid pursuit of the frightened birds.

The maximum forward distance the returning boomerang can be thrown is about 150 yards.

I trust my letter is not too long. The subject is one of absorbing interest and not one half of its potentialities are fully known to the investigator.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although this department is conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City.

GARBLED and incomplete as it is, the following song from the days of the pirates still has interest for the collector. There are several obvious errors in the text and the rhyme is gone in many places. Note that there are two William Craigs, the father on the merchant ship and the son on the pirate.

Mr. George Hirdt, who recovered the text, says by way of note: "I got this song from a Newfoundlander who, in his turn, heard it sung by a Gloucester fisherman who put in at his home place for bait. It is very incoherent, but as it is so very evidently of American origin I am sending it to you. I copied it word for word, neither omitting or adding anything."

The only change I have made in the text as sent me is to attempt to divide it into lines and verses. The original may well have had eight line verses instead of the four lines I have chosen to use. Otherwise, it is just as the wearing down process of continued singing has left it.

I'd like much any information or any other versions you might send me. I have seen somewhere a printed text, either in an old broadside or an old songster, but have never run across it as a living song. Wonder if any one knows the tune?

William Craig

(Contributed by Mr. George Hirdt)

Our ship is a ship from New York,
To Liverpool we are bound;
Our Captain's name is William Craig,
A native of our town.

"Eulio! Eulio!"
Bold Madam cried,
"Lower your topsails down on your caps,
Come under my lee!"

Poor frightened sailors,
Not knowing what to do,
They lowered their topsails down on their caps
And rounded their ship to.

They rushed on board of this merchant ship
And chopped up every man;
Some they killed, and some they sliced,
And some they cut the throats.

And four of our brave seamen bold
They perished in the battle.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

They searched the old frame right fore and aft,
They ransacked everything;
At length they found a dead man
Stabbed in his cabin.

He called to his bosun,
Whose name was William Craig,
"Oh Craig! oh Craig! Come down below
And crack your father's neck."

Craig he hastened down on the floor
Like a man of carriage bold;
When he saw his father's face
It made his blood run cold.

"Are you going to murder me?"
Those very words he said,
And with a naked sword in hand
He soon chopped off his head.

They ransacked the old frame right fore and aft,
They ransacked everything;
At length they found a virgin
In starboard east cabin.

So merrilie she played the harp,
So merrilie she sang,
Not knowing of the murders
Or anything that was done.

Some did curse, some did swear,
Some said they'd have her for a wife;
He said, "Damn your eyes!
I'll end all strife!"

He rushed upon this virgin
Without a fear or dread,
And with a naked sword in hand
He soon chopped off her head.

They rushed aboard of their own ship,
So merrilie they cracked on;
Keg o' brandy on the capstan,
So merrilie they sang.

"Pirate's life is a merry, merry life,
Merry men are we!
To-night we all merry, merry be
And to-morrow we'll be sober."

Away we sailed all that long night
And a part of a next day,
Until we saw a lofty ship
To the windward of the Ushant.

Keep bearing down upon
    Till she ranged on longside;
Bold Madam with his speaking trumpet,
    "Where are you from?" he cried.

. . . . . .

    Quarter-deck walked he,
Not caring to speak to him
    But steering on his way.

Bold Madam scratched his head
    And tore his hair in vain.
Said, "Damn your eyes! I'll let you know
    It's I that rules the main!"

Stout and able vessel
    Lies open to the deep,
Hauled off her painted canvas,
    Showed him three rows of teeth.

Till broadside for a broadside
    So merrilie they cracked on,
Until those cruel pirates
    Began for to come down.

"Oh, quarter! Oh, quarter!"
    Bold Madam, he cried.
"No quarter! No quarter!"
    Bold Radnor, he replied.

"Fight on, fight on, my heroes brave,
    We gain ten thousand pound;
We'll sink those cruel pirates
    To hell eternal bound."

SEVERAL replies have come in to a request made in the February 20th issue for a song beginning:

"We've reached the land of hills and stones
Where all is strewn with buffalo bones."

But no one has yet sent a complete text. One near relative of the song in question was sent in by Frank Earnest. The tune is "Beulah Land."

Nebraska Land

(*Contributed by Frank Earnest, Colorado*)

We've reached the land of drouth and heat
Where nothing grows for man to eat.
We do not live, we only stay;
We are too poor to get away.

Oh Nebraska land, sweet Nebraska land,
As on thy burning soil I stand
I look away across the plains,
And wonder why it never rains.
Then Gabriel speaks with trumpet sound
And says the rain has passed around.

Our horses are the broncho race,
Starvation stares them in the face;
Our fattest hogs all go to snout,
The coyotes eat our chickens out.

ADDRESS all letters—R. W. Gordon, Care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 8TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE ISLAND OF FRANCE — ***Albert Richard Wetjen***
Capt. Blakeney vowed to find it.

DUTY — ***Leo Walmsley***
In the jungle a scientist lay hiding.

RACKTEEN — ***Fiswoode Tarleton***
The mountaineer repeated his challenge.

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH The Goodly Company of Adventurers — ***Post Sargent***
Many lands were his battlefields.

A MANIFEST DESTINY Conclusion — ***Arthur D. Howden Smith***
The climax of General Walker's filibuster.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE ISSUE following the next will contain *long* stories by Harold Lamb, William P. Barron and Arthur D. Howden Smith; short stories by F. R. Buckley, Bruce Johns and F. St. Mars; a long poem by Helen Von Kolnitz Hyer; stories of Tibet, the South Seas, Samarcand, California, Central America, the North Atlantic; of soldiers, sailors, adventurers the world around.

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VOL. LVIII No. 4

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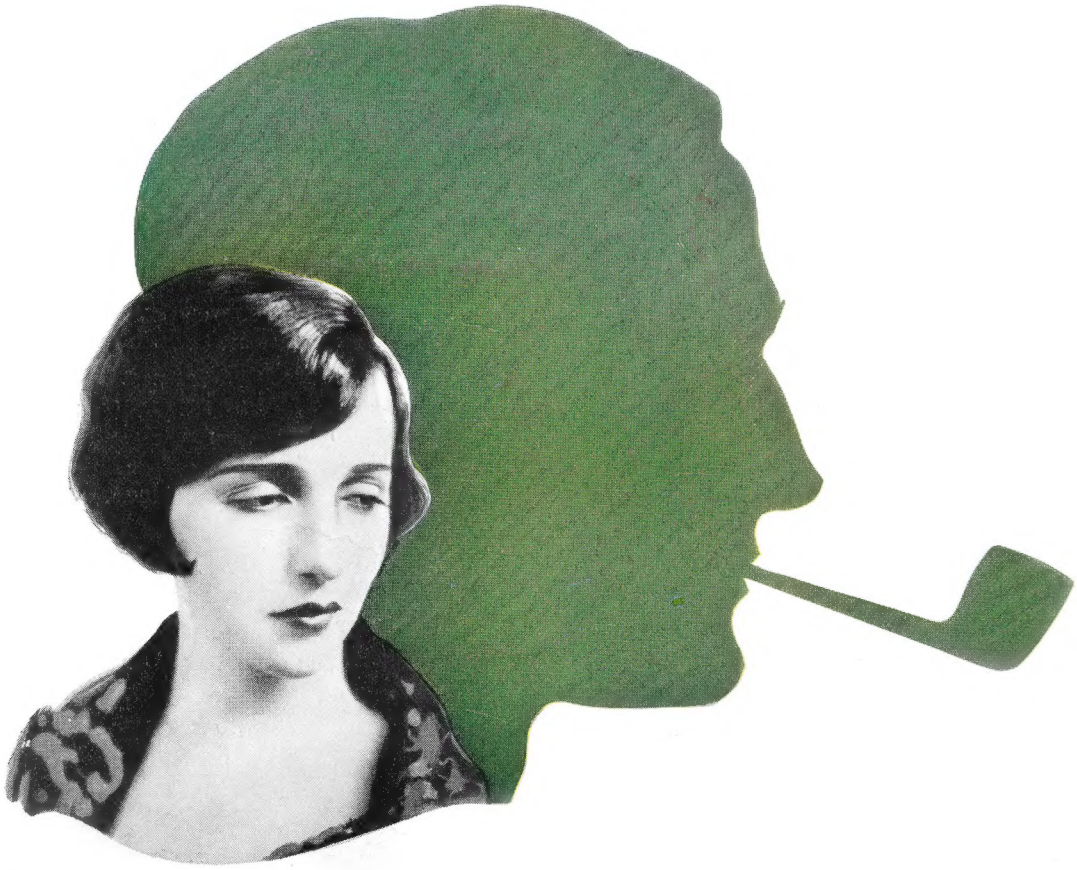

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